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Making Space for Respite: Care Work in the Immigrant Rights Movement on the U.S.-Mexico Border

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Making Space for Respite: Care Work in the Immigrant Rights Movement on the U.S.-Mexico Border

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Dedication

To my mother, for showing me how to care.

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Abstract

Making Space for Respite: Care Work in the Immigrant Rights Movement on the U.S.-Mexico Border

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My research focuses on nonprofit organizations, part of a broad immigrant rights movement, working on the U.S.-Mexico borderlands to provide much-needed assistance to migrants and asylum seekers. These organizations manage physically and emotionally demanding tasks that highlight the practical implications of helping displaced people. In my dissertation I ask, why do frontline caregivers assisting migrants and asylum seekers on the border stay committed despite low or no pay? How do they manage organizational resource scarcities that increase individual workloads and result in burnout? I answer these questions by analyzing how staff and volunteers provide legal aid and hospitality services in two nonprofit organizations in El Paso, Texas. During 2017-2018, I conducted participant observation in a legal aid office and at a migrant shelter for a combined 13 months while also conducting 51 interviews with caregivers. This allowed me to investigate the relationship between the practical and emotional hardships within the social movement helping migrants and asylum seekers.

I find that these resource-scarce organizations manage not just the physical conglomeration of migrants and asylum seekers, but also their collective suffering. Caregivers and their organizations become selective service providers, favoring migrant cases that are winnable in the case of the legal aid office, or families that are more self-sufficient and easier to manage in the case of the shelter. Individuals physically and emotionally distance themselves from caregiving while maintaining cognitive attachments to the work. Case selectivity and detached attachments, as I respectively term these coping strategies, are articulated in the everyday life of the movement. These practices also generate meanings and moralities that enable caregivers to care adequately for the migrants they can care for, and manage their own emotions when they cannot. Research on emotions and social movements mostly focuses on how highly emotional

experiences make people join social movements. I look at how emotions are also an outcome of the practices taking place in social movements. I show that everyday caregiving practices in social movements shape, in this case sustain, commitment to social change.

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Chapter 1. Research Objectives and Link Between Care Work and Burnout

Across the world, the displacement of people represents a care challenge. Moving away from family, friends, and communities depletes resources, increases vulnerability, and compounds trauma. Migrating for economic and/or safety reasons is also a destabilizing experience for working class and minoritized groups. Families, friends, nonprofits, churches, and other organizations can provide some support in destination countries. However, it is never smooth sailing. Precarity remains a defining feature of displacement and migration, from start to finish.

At the end of 2020, 82.4 million people had been forcibly displaced according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights-- double the number from a decade ago. The rapid increase in displacement, on top of established migratory patterns to higher income countries, generates political pressures on governments around the world. In the United States, the top destination country, migration, asylum, and refugee resettlement have galvanized the Right and strained the immigration system. With its amendment in, the Immigration and Nationality Act eliminated the quota system that had favored immigration from Western and Northern Europe and had banned it from Asia (U.S. State Department). The new system favored family reunification and highly skilled immigrants (U.S. House of Representatives), and through a series of more subsequent changes to the law, applied caps to the number of visas issued every year. As measures to restrict legal immigration grew so did efforts to address mounting undocumented migration, particularly from Latin America. Restrictions intensified in the 1990s by

militarizing border enforcement measures, increasing the powers of immigration judges and prosecutors, limiting migrants' rights to fight deportation, and cutting migrants' access to public services (Massey and Riosmena 2010).

While the number of undocumented immigrants from Latin America stabilized by 2017 (Lopez, Passel, and Cohn 2021), asylum cases from the region have increased in the last six years (Wasem,2020). Asylum and refugee policies provide an increasingly significant framework for Latin American migration. The Mariel Boatlift as well as Civil Wars in Central America spiked the number of asylum cases in the 1980s and 1990s (Wasem 2020). In the 2010s, organized criminal organizations' violence and gender-based violence are some of the main reasons Latin Americans seek relief.

Since 1980, the Refugee Act provides the legal framework in the United States for asylum and refugee status to those persecuted on the basis of "race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." The Refugee Act was an attempt by legislators to conform to international norms and curve the preference given to citizens of hostile countries (Yarnold 1990). The Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, expanded the grounds for asylum seekers' detention, made them deportable under "expedited removal" measures, and introduced a filing deadline of one year (Nezer 2014).

The post- 9/11 system further securitized immigration, shifting its administration from the Department of Justice to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). From its beginning in the Department of Labor, the administration of immigration in the 21st century has taken on a penal and militarized nature (Romero and Zarrugh 2018; Dunn

1995). Among the new restrictions for asylum seekers include narrower interpretation of persecution and a larger burden on claimants to produce evidence under the REAL ID Act (Nezer 2014). As a result, displaced peoples and migrants meet extraordinary forces trying to keep them out of the US or punish them for getting in.

The collision of displacement and restrictive immigration enforcement creates social suffering. However, this dissertation is not about (im)migrants and asylum seekers. It is about individuals and organizations responding to the social suffering of migrants and asylum seekers. Specifically, I write about the immigrant rights movement in the border city of El Paso, Texas, a meeting place of the so-called "first" and "third worlds." The distance and closeness of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, the United States and Mexico, creates social, political, and economic contrasts that both draw in and push out people. This setting enables solidarity responses, ranging from material to emotional support, from Americans and Mexicans. Yet, these responses are also conditioned by the same oppressive structures generating social suffering. Here I show why and how solidarity with migrants manifests as care work at the border, by analyzing how movement participants organize their efforts to help migrants and asylum seekers in El Paso.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

The U.S. Mexico border is a contentious place because of the various efforts by various social, economic, and political actors to define and regulate it. One of these practices is crossing the border, which since the end of the 19th Century has become increasingly difficult. While I do not have the space or time to delve into detail on this

question, suffice to say that imperial formations, the rise of nation states, war, and a global economy dependent on the circulation of capital and on the dispossession of communal goods together shape why crossing the borders is difficult. As Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) writes, the border is like an open wound "where the Third World grates against the First and bleeds."

In this dissertation, I am interested in analyzing the social movement responses to the social suffering at the border, specifically, the solidarity responses from community members, organizations *and* non-local actors in the face of an immigration and refugee crisis. By the end of my field work, apprehensions of migrants at the border reached their highest point since 2012 (Bialik 2019). The immigration court backlog surpassed one million cases, and overwhelmed detention facilities that were simultaneously detaining and releasing migrants and asylum seekers. As a result, the workload of organizations advocating for migrants' rights and providing services to them mounted, but their resources remained limited. My dissertation is about how two social movement organizations in El Paso, Texas, managed these conditions while continuing to help migrants between 2017-2018. I was deeply embedded in the work of these organizations in order to ascertain what solidarity actually looks like. I found that solidarity is constructed a variety of actors, such as religious sisters and radical activists, who commit to the care of migrants. This iteration of solidarity applies to the social and political context of contemporary North America, specifically to the U.S. Mexico border.

The sociological concept of solidarity has roots in works by Marx and Durkheim. Durkheim's concept of organic solidarity explains social cohesiveness of modern

societies as a result of divisions of labor. In these societies, he argues, individuals and groups specialize in certain occupations and tasks, engendering interdependence. On the other hand, Marx sees solidarity as an outcome of class consciousness among people exploited by a capitalist system. These conceptions of solidarity address issues of unity: How do modernizing societies that value individuality stay together? How can exploited workers come together and take hold of history? The macro-historical analyses led me to wonder about solidarity at the micro-level, and how solidarity is experienced. The Immigrant Rights Movement and its organizations show solidarity with migrants, striving for unity and compassion, under difficult conditions. The individuals helping and advocating for migrants work hard to improve the lives of migrants and asylum seekers in stressful situations designed to deter migration.

The literature on solidarity is vast because the concept has been used to describe a host of mutualist collective behavior across centuries of mobilizations as well as the representation of such struggles. My analysis is much narrower, focusing on the practices of solidarity at the border. I am interested in organizations and individuals advocating and mobilizing for the rights and wellbeing of migrants and asylum seekers, that despite few resources care about and for them in a myriad of ways. Their commitment is remarkable because the conditions of their work are extremely stressful. I found that everyone was burnt out, yet everyone persisted. The literature on care work explains the stress and frustration I saw and experienced as a participant observer as a social fact of "people work" (Brotheridge and Grandey 2002), leading to high turnover in care work professions. Why was this not a problem in El Paso? Did the social movement struggle

provide conditions to reduce turnover? Why is there such a big effort to help strangers and why is it so morally charged? To answer these questions, I had to understand the relationship between emotions and the care being provided in the immigrant rights movement. In the next section, I turn to an overview of literature on care work and begin to draw a connection to themes in social movement studies. I continue with reviews of commitment in social movements, and pro-immigrant mobilization in El Paso, Texas in Chapter Two.

Care work

Care work is typically defined as the face-to-face activities providing for the physical and affective needs of care receivers (Huang 2016). Care work is usually operationalized along occupational groupings such as teachers, nurses, and nannies; relationship categories like mothers, daughters, friends; and/or by economic or public sectors, e.g., health care system and childcare (Duffy et al. 2013). Care work can be paid or unpaid, but scholars argue care work across the spectrum of paid-unpaid has benefits beyond the receiver, and is a public good. Because most of the individuals engaged in this kind of labor are women, gender scholars have been the ones paying most attention to this category of work (England 2005). Charles and Gursky (2004), for example, find that despite the weakening of hierarchical structures in post-industrial societies that prevented women from climbing career ladders, women continue to crowd into all-female "occupational ghettoes", such as care work. This type of work has been shown to pay less than other types of work, regardless of the gender of the worker (England 1992,

Kilbourne et al 1994). But because the majority of care workers are women, this association persists.

Research on care work highlights the personal, face-to-face nature of the work. Care workers will either find enough fulfillment in their work to offset any pay penalties or they may fall into a love trap which prevents them from abandoning recipients. The interpersonal relationships and responsibility for the recipient can also lead to the moralization of this line of work, holding individuals hostage to care (Knijn and Kremer 1997). A more recent line of inquiry has delved into the relationships between care work and markets, as either an invasion of the latter into the former's sphere (Hochschild 2012) or the constitution of both (Zelizer 2005).

Missing in these conceptualizations are those face-to-face activities that meet physical and affective needs in spaces of political struggle. The immigrant rights movement, along with others, provides care in the form of physical, intimate and emotional labor; however, this does not take place in traditional care settings, and is overlooked in the scholarship. Given its gendered nature—it is mostly women who do the critical but mundane, behind-the-scenes work of care in social movements—it is also made invisible. Instead, the public-facing aspects of movement life, charged emotions of exceptional moments like protests, and masculine figure heads get most of the attention. Conceptualizing movement participants as caregivers enriches care work literature by expanding our ideas of where care is happening, who is doing it, and the ends to which it is put. Attention to care work in social movements can show us how care work is even more commonplace, foundational, and productive than scholars thought.

Care work is stressful, especially in the context of social struggles. Social workers, a professional group at the frontlines of care provision, have significant experience in navigating tensions between professional expectations and social justice advocacy (Reisch 2019). Each of these poles, professionalism and activism, comes with its own set of demanding expectations. Studies on social workers confirm that large caseloads, time pressure, negative working environments, moral dilemmas, and policies that undermine adequate service provision lead to burnout (Diaconescu 2015).

Burnout is common in care work and other service-oriented jobs that depend on technical and interpersonal experience. Decades of research demonstrate that burnout leads to turnover among social workers (Wright and Cropanzano 1998; Abu-Bader 2000; Kim and Stoner 2008), physicians (Gundersen 2001; Linzer et al. 2009), nurses (Leiter and Maslach 2009; Van der Heijden 2019), and other human service professions (Mor Barak et al. 2001). In the context of social change efforts, Gomes and Maslach (1991) find that a combination of psychological stressors and high levels of commitment result in burnout.

Organizations can reduce burnout and subsequent turnover at the meso level by providing a supportive work environment and an equitable distribution of resources among social workers (Campbell et al. 2013). This may not be possible in resource-scarce settings. Sharmila Rudrappa (2004) develops the concept "radical caring" to denote the contradictory nature of care in settings that strive for social change. She studies domestic violence shelters for South Asian Americans where the professionalization of work, and the contradictions inherent in care, compromise radical

agendas. On the other hand, Hobbart and Kneese (2020) emphasize how social movements that embrace care provision under precarious circumstances create spaces of hope despite "dark histories and futures." Other studies highlight the role of deep-acting (Brotheridge and Grandey 2002), resilience (Collins 2007), and different forms of self-care (Brown 2020; Pyles 2020). Part of the job, then, involves caregivers employing emotional strategies to cope with the burnout emerging from politically-oriented care work.

A less studied strategy is the use of detachment in the face of emotional exhaustion. However, some contributions are worth noting. Rudrappa (2004) documents how counselors at South Asian domestic violence organizations in the US advise workers to maintain professional distance from victims to prevent burnout. This recommendation, however, turns out to undermine the intentions of caregivers working there: to reconnect with women of their own racial backgrounds and promote social change in their communities. Tobias Haeusermann (2018) develops the term "professionalised intimacy" to convey the coexistence of intimacy and professionalism among caregivers implementing a family care model in Germany's first dementia village. Cindy Cain (2012) illustrates how hospice workers take on detached attitudes towards death when debriefing with fellow care workers as a way of sustaining a professional self. Detachment proves important in professional settings in order to fulfill roles when emotions may be running high. However, when professional care work is embedded in social change efforts—an ideal context for burnout—detachment has not been studied sufficiently.

In this chapter I reviewed the legal framework of immigration operating in my research site and explained my research objectives. I have also introduced the theoretical linkages between care work and burnout and began to explain the relevance of this for social movement studies. In the following chapter, I flesh out this connection by reviewing work on solidarity efforts with Central American migrants and refugees, commitment to social movement participation, and the role of morality in these and other struggles.

Chapter 2. The Immigrant Rights Movement and Context of El Paso, Texas

In this chapter I review the role of Latinx organizations in the mobilization of immigrants. I review recent literature on the Immigrant Rights Movement and subsequently provide the historical context of migration in El Paso, Texas, and descriptions of my research sites: Compromiso and Casa Asuncion. I end the chapter with sections on the methodology I used as well as on the terminology I employed for key concepts.

INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES TO THE IMMIGRANT RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The mobilization of immigrants and their allies in the U.S.-Mexico border region, and the U.S. Southwest generally, has been dominated by Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. This has mainly been a result of the annexation of the northern half of Mexico by the United States after the Mexican-American War in 1848. It is also because of proximity and available work for Mexicans on the US side. Since then, mutual aid and civil rights organizations, labor unions, and the Chicano Movement emerged in the region to defend and advocate for the rights and well-being of Mexicans and/or Mexican Americans. Their level of influence has varied through the years. Their legacy, though, continues with Chicano/Mexican/Indigenous ideology and iconography, a Christian ethos of solidarity, and the provision of services. Organizations are usually divided into smaller local grassroots organizations, and national/regional level ones with corporate and philanthropic funding (Marquez and Jennings 2000).

In the case of ethnic organizations operating in El Paso, Texas, Castañeda (2020) finds that the 38 percent of them provide some kind of service while 23 percent focus on

advocacy. Most literature on El Paso pro-immigrant mobilizations has looked at the Border Network for Human Rights (BNHR), which in its earlier avatar was the Border Rights Coalition (the Border Rights Coalition had members from faith-based and immigrant service advocacy organizations, and from the League for Immigration, Border Rights and Immigration) (Dunn 2009). BNHR is a grassroot organization that mobilizes its members across the city to protest and lobby for immigration reform, including documenting instances of abuse by local and immigration enforcement agencies. (Heyman, Morales, and Nuñez 2009). The organizations in my study, Compromiso and Casa Asunción, are older and spend most of their time providing direct assistance. However, all these organizations have collaborated in various coalitions and protests, time and resources permitting in the case of Compromiso and Casa Asunción.

El Paso has an extensive and complex history of pro-immigrant mobilization. While I cannot give a comprehensive overview of it here, I want to highlight the confluence of approaches in El Paso: Catholic/Protestant Social Justice, revolutionary/Chicano, Civil Rights, and Human Rights. Untangling how and when these approaches are used in El Paso and the border region would require another dissertation. However, the approaches speak to the specificity of exploitation and abuse suffered by marginalized communities at the border in the last two centuries. They also shape, and are shaped by, the funding, external actors, visions, goals, and practices of the movement (Marquez 2003).

Doug McAdam's (1982) political process theory (PPT) is an important reference point for social movement studies. Its integration of major components of mobilization--

political consciousness and the utilization of resources at critical moments—provides a comprehensive picture of social change efforts. Christian Smith's *Resisting Reagan* (1996) is an early example of a structural analysis of the Solidarity Movement using PPT. Smith concludes however by signaling the importance of incorporating participants' life experiences and moral convictions. Around this time, challenges to PPT's structuralist approach emerged, in particular its lack of consideration of the relationship between culture and structure (Goodwin and Jasper, 1999; Polletta 1999). This more culture-aware approach has resulted in studies highlighting the emotional (Gould 2009; Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001), moral (Young 2006), and biographical side of mobilization.

James Jasper's *The Art of Moral Protest* (1997) is a *tour de force* in this cultural turn. Jasper pays particular attention to how movement actors' biographies and creativity explain mobilization, bringing out the moral and creative dimensions of protest that breathe life into structures and opportunities. In this new tradition, *Convictions of the Heart* by Sharon Nepstad (2004a) incorporates moral and biographical explanations of activists' participation in the Solidarity Movement of the 1980s. Nepstad's agency-centered cultural approach contextualizes movement leaders' social positions to explain how they became so attached to the Central American story and how they transformed the physical and moral resources of religious institutions into political mobilization. In this account, meaning and moral fulfillment in participation is key to understand why members got involved and continued their work with the movement. Additionally, Nepstad's focus on "risky" pro-peace activism (2004b) elaborates on the element of sacrifice or martyrdom that can be motivating and satisfying for participants.

A decade before Nepstad, Susan Coutin (1993) focused her analysis of the Solidarity Movement on participants' practices. She conceptualized social movements as social action, illustrating how protest practices enact the change they advocate. In this approach, cultural practices and innovations are not only resources, but also adaptations to historical circumstances. In a similar vein, Hillary Cunningham (1995) argues that the use of religion as a discourse in the sanctuary movement is more than a resource. Rather, religion mediates, interprets, and innovates the relationship between agency and structure.

More recent work on the immigrant rights movement expands the scope of its study against the backdrop of heightened immigration control in the United States. The massive protest of 2006 in reaction to the *Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Bill of 2005* (H.R. 4437), which only passed in the House of Representatives, was an important milestone in this regard. Alfonso Gonzales (2013) analyzes the lack of major legislative victories for the movement, highlighting the role of an anti-immigration bloc composed of politicians, media, and think tanks. The anti-immigrant hegemony is based on both domination and consent, making it difficult to dismantle what Gonzales calls the "homeland security state." Walter Nicholls (2019) traces the development of the immigrant rights movement from grassroot efforts in the 1990s to the national stage in the 2010s. He concludes that the nationalization of the movement led to a disconnection from grassroots efforts, and the accumulation of economic and political capital among a few acquiescent organizations that did not challenge border enforcement or deportations. Zepeda-Millán (2017) provides another

account revolving around 2006. This one is more concerned about mobilization itself, describing the narrow and imminent threat of H.R. 4437 as a catalyst. Zepeda-Millán notes the important role of the Latino media in organizing protest. He also highlights the racializing components of the law that fed into the crafting a collective Latinx identity.

These works on the Immigrant Rights Movement deal almost exclusively with Latinx mobilization. Most likely, this is a result of the size of this immigrant group in the United States, and even within this group, Mexicans and Central Americans dominate the narrative. Monisha Das Gupta (2006) provides an account of the mobilization of South Asian American organizations, one that decenters citizenship as its objective. This refreshing approach highlights creative efforts to introduce a new narrative about South Asian immigrants in what she calls "space-making" organizations. It also challenges citizenship as the only source of rights, especially for groups of people who prefer mobility to the rootedness of the nation-state. This insight has specific relevance for Mexicans and Central Americans crossing the southern border, given their circular patterns of migration in the past, which have been significantly truncated since the 1990s.

COMMITMENT, BURNOUT, AND MORALITY

Social scientists have studied various kinds of attachments to and within social movements. Immaterial attachments to morality, projects, or ideas define movement frames, goals, and tactics (Jasper 1998; Doezema 2001; Shih 2019). Material attachments to place, work/professions, relationships, and community also contribute to movement participation and reproduction under threat (Oselin 2015; Escobar 2001; Jasper 1997).

However, attachments can also undermine movement goals because there is a finite number of emotional ties one can make to causes, people, and places (Goodwin 1997; Snow et al., 1980). Strong attachments to social change can lead to burnout due to the "culture of martyrdom" prevalent among activist circles (Chen and Gorski 2015).

Collective identity is another factor explaining commitment (Klandermans 2004). Belinda Robnett (1996) finds that gender exclusion in leadership roles positioned women as intermediaries and (micro)mobilizers in the Civil Rights Movement, which in turn increased grassroot participation. Strong identification and a nurturant emotional culture among middle-class white women with postpartum depression also encouraged participation in the postpartum support group movement (Taylor 1999). In cases where attachments do not necessarily involve a collective identity or a shared experience of oppression, how are they maintained when tested under stress?

Sociological work on detachment in social movements as a strategy to increase commitment is limited. Social movement literature focuses on disengagement, which is conceptualized as the opposite of commitment or the exhaustion of it. This results in the end of participation or the shift towards participation in other movements (Klandermans 2009). Detachment as measured disengagement, without ending in turnover, remains untheorized.

Using previous research and his own work on the Dutch peace movement, Klandermans (2009) argues that the psychological costs of participation, like frustration, are not enough to cause burnout. Rather, it is these psychological stressors in combination with high levels of commitment that lead to burnout. This perspective shifts

the conversation on why social movement actors persist away from waning participation due to a lack of commitment, to how too much commitment also leads to turnover. In a similar vein, Chen and Gorski (2015) frame human rights activists' burnout as a combination of self-inflicted pressure from working on overwhelming social problems of oppression, whilst receiving little organizational support to deal with the burnout that results from it.

Literature touching on burnout in social movements has focused on the persistence of actors in organizations when burnout emerges. Downton and Wehr (1991) identify shared leadership, distribution of organizational roles, reaffirmation of ideology, rituals, and strengthened relational ties as factors increasing commitment among social movement members. Nepstad (2004) identifies the reinforcement of group beliefs and identity, strengthening of relationships, and provision of material needs to reduce turnover in high-risk activism. Other scholars have added acknowledging movement successes, integrating opportunities for professional growth, and encouraging exercise and hobbies to cope with stress (Chen and Gorski 2015).

These strategies are helpful in strengthening the three commitment styles studied by Burt Klandermans (2009): affective, continuance, and normative attachments. *Affective commitment* is the emotional attachment to movements built on gratifying exchanges between participants and movements. It leads to greater satisfaction in interpersonal relations, resulting in greater commitment. *Continuance commitment* involves investing time, energy, and resources in the movement. As the costs of leaving increase, leaving the movement becomes less likely. Lastly, *Normative commitment*

reflects congruence between movement values and participants' values. These commitment styles, and the strategies strengthening them, make activists more secure in their attachments, and therefore less vulnerable to factors leading to burnout and turnover. However, Klandermans (2009) does not delve into the resources required for each of the commitment styles he describes. My study focuses on how commitment is sustained in a resource-scarce context, made more stressful and constrained due to an uncertain policy regime.

Moral commitments matter to contemporary social movements. Appeals to morality are essential in recruiting participants, maintaining engagement, and communicating claims. As a set of normative ideas that may or may not conform with social reality, morality can spur people into action. For instance, Jasper's notion of 'moral shock' describes individuals' vertiginous feeling upon coming across facts that offend their normative ideas about how the world should be. This shock then activates social change efforts. The role of movement leaders in mobilizing morality to sustain movement participation has been studied (Kanter 1972; Klandermans 2009). Movement leaders can recruit moral support from outsiders to grant legitimacy to movements (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). Leaders can also (re)frame movement strategies and goals to appeal to the life histories of individuals participating (Nepstad and Bob 2006; Lio et al. 2008).

Morality also shapes the practices of social movements. Social movements adopt practices that reaffirm moral commitment and keep participants going. Eric Hirsch (1990) notes that conscious reflection on the suffering of others reinforced commitment among Columbia University students protesting the university's investment policy in apartheid

South Africa. Nepstad (2004) shows that participating in Christian rituals and reflecting on biblical stories rejuvenated the moral commitment of risk-taking activists from a Catholic leftist peace movement.

Moral commitments can be at the collective or individual level. Nancy Whittier (1995) finds that the continued participation and collective identity of radical feminists was shaped by the adoption of certain moral principles, such as the Golden Rule. Paul Lichterman (1996) finds that middle class environmentalists demonstrate 'personalized politics', a style of moral commitment that stresses personal efficacy and conscious consumerism. Moral commitments are not, however, always in the interest of participants or social movements. For instance, moral dispositions can end up undermining social activists' social mobility (Archer 2007). Lichterman (2005) finds that organizing styles founded on the moral satisfaction of voicing truths, while not critically reflecting on them with new members, undermined the growth and survival of activist groups. Morality, then, is a double-edge sword, for it can strengthen commitment to the wellbeing of others, but it can also make moral subjects vulnerable to exploitation and lead to a moralization of intervention that ultimately undermines movements' growth.

My research bridges the literature on care work and social movements by focusing on caregivers in the immigrant rights movement. In tracing the relationship between their emotions and organizational practices, I show how and why caregivers persist, and how participants remain committed to the immigrant rights movement despite mounting pressures.

CONTEXT: EL PASO, TEXAS

I chose El Paso, Texas, as the site of my research because it is a historic migratory pathway for Mexicans and other Latin Americans towards the United States. Consequently, it is also a historic site for the emergence and development of immigration control. The Border Patrol was established by Congress in May 1924 within the Department of Labor to prevent and address unauthorized crossings. At first, the Border Patrol struggled to implement broad immigration laws, but by the 1940s specialized in policing and arresting Mexican unauthorized workers on the southern border (Hernandez 2010). Operation "Hold the Line," which amassed physical barriers and agents on the border to deter crossings, was developed in El Paso in 1993 and later implemented across the southern border (Dunn 2009). The "zero tolerance" policy that lead to thousands of family separations along the southern border in 2018 was tested in El Paso before going into full effect.

Efforts to assist and advocate for migrants on the border also have a long history in El Paso. Many refugees from the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) and the Cristero War (1926-1929) came to the U.S. through El Paso and were aided there. Central Americans fleeing civil wars in the 1980s also sought refuge in the city. Currently El Paso is at the forefront of assisting asylum seekers, even though the infrastructure and resources of the city pale in comparison to those of major metropolitan areas in the United States. El Paso's poverty rate for example is higher than the national average (U.S. Census Bureau). These structural factors set the conditions for caregiving in El Paso, Texas.

El Paso has been historically linked to migration due to its geographic location. In the early 20th century, El Paso served as a depot for the labor needs of railroad and mining companies in the region and other industries elsewhere in the country. In 1910, more than 43,000 Mexican nationals were transported from El Paso alone to various locations across the Southwest and Midwest—about one fifth of the total Mexican population in the United States according to the 1910 census information (Sanchez 1995). Many Mexican migrants preferred staying close to the border, so many made El Paso their first home; by 1920 close to 40,000 Mexicans lived there (out of a population of 77,560) and those failing to find jobs moved elsewhere using the railroads networks meeting in the city (Sanchez 1995; Texas Almanac, n.d.).

During World War II, El Paso again served as a hub for a labor market of *braceros*, Mexican agricultural workers recruited to fill in for American men fighting in the war. The agreement for this worker program between the U.S. and Mexico lasted until 1964. El Paso and Ciudad Juarez across the border became important recruitment centers during this period. They served as the recruitment network for *braceros* going to the Midwest and Rocky Mountain states (Mize and Swords 2010). In 1954, the El Paso Herald Post reported that more than 80,000 Mexican *braceros* passed through El Paso every year.

Another significant wave of migrants began their ascent north to the U.S.-Mexico border during the Central American Civil Wars and Revolution in Nicaragua (Garcia 2006). During the 1980s the population of Salvadorians, Guatemalans and Nicaraguans in the United States increased by more than 250 percent (Blanchard et al. 2011). Between

1983 and 1993, the number of apprehensions of migrants by Border Patrol in El Paso were the highest recorded for the city (United States Border Patrol, n.d.) with more than 200,000 apprehensions each year (except 1988-89). Not even during the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, when millions of Mexicans were economically displaced, was this number so high in El Paso. During the first Central American refugee crisis, community organizations in El Paso provided shelter and legal assistance to Central American asylum seekers despite the unfavorable odds of acquiring legal relief from the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS). One attorney at the time told a local newspaper that in all of her years handling thousands of Central American asylum cases, only one person had received asylum in El Paso (El Paso Times, 1985).

The current economic, political, and environmental crises in Central America has once again led many asylum seekers to cross the border through El Paso. Since 2014, increasing numbers of migrants and asylum seekers from Central America have made their way to the U.S.-Mexico border. They face an immigration system that has criminalized and detained immigrants since the 1990s (Welch and Schuster 2005; Abrego et al. 2017). Along with them, asylum seekers from Cuba, Brazil, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo also make their way to El Paso, albeit in much lower numbers. Apprehensions at the El Paso border have not reached the levels of the 1980s and 1990s and have been on a general downward trend since the early 2000s. However, since 2014 the proportion of family units and unaccompanied children apprehended at the southwest border increased from 29 percent in 2014 to 47 percent in 2018. In El Paso,

these groups make up 50 and 56 percent of total border apprehensions in Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018, respectively (U.S. Customs and Border Protection 2019; U.S. Customs and Border Protection 2018). Out of all inadmissible migrants attempting to enter the country through official ports of entry in El Paso, 24 percent sought asylum in FY2017 and 29 percent in FY2018.

For those seeking asylum in El Paso, the odds are unfavorable. The average asylum denial rate in El Paso immigration courts was 93 percent between Fiscal Years 2013-2018 and only 14 percent of asylum claims have been granted between October 2000 and January 2019. Within the same timeframe, about half of asylum seekers have been represented by legal counsel in El Paso and about 75 percent of them were detained during the asylum process (TRAC Immigration, 2020). The number of asylum decisions has markedly increased since FY 2014. Because a large number of asylum seekers are family units, which detention centers in the United States are not equipped to detain, many are released on parole to friends and family members residing in the U.S. However, neither Customs and Border Protection nor Immigration and Customs Enforcement are capable of reuniting families, so this work has fallen onto local, mostly faith-based nonprofits. This development grows workloads and absorbs the resources of organizations that also continue to service their regular clients.

Migrants and asylum seekers face various obstacles upon arriving in the United States. Asylum seekers usually enter the country through ports of entry (part of the "inadmissibles" group in CBP documents) or between ports of entry. This could be a few yards from an official port of entry or miles away in the desert. Depending on bed space

at near-by detention centers, whether individuals are part of a family unit, and if they have potential sponsors in the United States, asylum seekers are either detained or released on their own recognizance. Organizations in El Paso provide assistance to asylum seekers in both situations, detained and non-detained. They provide legal assistance to those detained and shelter to those released who subsequently travel to other parts of the country to stay with sponsors while their asylum case is processed and adjudicated. At the same time, El Paso organizations are helping migrants under different circumstances who reside in or are passing through El Paso (e.g. seeking work permits, residency, shelter, etc.).

RESEARCH SITES

This dissertation is based on a border ethnography of the care work provided to migrants and asylum seekers between 2017 and 2018, when enhanced immigration enforcement began to consolidate in the United States. I conducted participant observation with two nonprofit organizations. One, that I call Compromiso, provides legal services to migrants and asylum seekers. The other organization is a migrant shelter, which I am calling Casa Asunción.

Both organizations faced very high demand for helping migrants, with the criminalization of migrants (Abrego et al. 2017) and the militarization of the border (Dunn 1995; Dunn 2009) both at a peak. Compromiso had a high caseload and limited resources to expand services while I worked there. At Casa Asunción, shifts, case work, house maintenance, and everyday interactions arising from living at the shelter took up

most of the day for volunteers and myself. At both sites, changes in local enforcement practices and the aggressiveness of immigration enforcement increased workloads and created a high degree of uncertainty. At the same time, resource scarcity made work difficult, stretching workers' and volunteers' obligations.

Immigration enforcement practices would determine how help was provided by these organizations. Both Compromiso and Casa Asunción are part of the immigrant rights movement in the El Paso region. Staff in these organizations and government agencies such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) coordinate with each other for various administrative and legal needs. Migrants going before immigration courts or applying for an immigration benefit are not afforded the right to an attorney, making nonprofit organizations such as Compromiso de facto public defenders. Casa Asunción, on the other hand, provides hospitality for the hundreds of asylum seekers released from ICE custody in any given week due to a lack of space in detention centers. The dramatic need for help on both legal and hospitality fronts, along with the harrowing stories of migrants and asylum seekers, makes working in these spaces an intense experience. The scholarly work investigating the immigrant rights movement directly or indirectly reflects this emotional component of the care work conducted in these organizations (Lorentzen 1991; Coutin 1993; Nepstad 2004; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008)

COMPROMISO

Compromiso was founded in 1987 and is focused on representing low-income immigrants, including asylum seekers, victims of crime, and families seeking reunification who otherwise would not be able to afford an attorney. The organization is widely known in El Paso because it is one of the few organizations providing low cost services in the city. Compromiso also works as a clearing house in the immigrant community with regards to immigration policies, and has become a regional standard-bearer for immigrant rights.

Broadly, daily tasks at Compromiso involve meeting with migrants and asylum seekers, and working on their cases. The pace of these tasks depends on the types of cases being worked on. Adjustment of status cases usually require putting together a packet that is mailed to immigration agencies. On the other hand, asylum cases require visits to the detention center, gathering evidence from family members, and putting together packets for parole or asylum, depending on the case.

During the time that I conducted participant observation at Compromiso, staff was mostly comprised of first and second-generation Mexican Americans with familial ties to Northern Mexico. Volunteers at Compromiso were college students studying in El Paso or elsewhere, also Mexican Americans or in some cases, white. Volunteers usually worked over the summer. One position, assistant to the sole attorney in the organization, was filled by two white women who volunteered for a year each after finishing college. Another position, detention center intake specialist, was filled by two Catholic nuns while I was at Compromiso. I substituted one of them and worked closely with the other. Both

of them were white women in their seventies and had been in a religious order for most of their lives, doing social justice work in the United States and abroad.

Compromiso was a struggling organization while I was there. Before Rebecca, the director and sole attorney in the organization, took over, Compromiso had had three executive directors in three years. The organization was badly managed, and an outstanding loan crippled its ability to hire additional attorneys, hire more staff members, or provide benefits to all. Ana, the executive assistant, tightly administered the financials of the organization to keep it afloat. Most of Compromiso's funding came from small grants and donations. The biggest grantor was a Catholic religious order, Sisters of Mercy, who were also the mortgage holders of the building owned by Compromiso near downtown El Paso. Compromiso also had a religious sister on staff at all times. Because religious sister receive funds through their orders, Compromiso does not have to pay them.

CASA ASUNCIÓN

The other organization included in my study, Casa Asunción, provides hospitality services. Casa Asunción was established in 1978 and is rooted in Catholic social justice teachings. The organization was founded with no clear objective other than putting the gospel into practice, but began hosting undocumented migrants when the founders realized these migrants had nowhere to turn for shelter, food, clothing, and other basic necessities. With the help of the local archdiocese, the group was granted an old building in downtown El Paso, close to immigrant neighborhoods where the needs of

undocumented people became apparent. Casa Asunción also offers a border immersion program that seeks to educate high school, college, and church groups on issues regarding immigration, economic development, social justice, and human rights.

At Casa Asunción, a regular day may include being on shift. This means running the house for 8 hours, and ensuring that the shelter is safe at all times, chores are being done, food is getting prepared, rules are being followed, and that any emergency that comes up is attended to. The volunteer on shift is also in charge of, with help from others, receiving, orienting, and initiating the 10-30 asylum seekers the shelter would normally get Monday through Friday.

Casa Asunción was mostly staffed by summer and year-long volunteers who lived in one of two houses operating as shelters. During my time as a volunteer, white women, in college or recent graduates, formed the majority of the volunteer community. Three older white men were also volunteers; one of them part of a religious order, and another who had recently decided not to continue religious training to become a priest. I was constantly mistaken as a seminarian or theology student while conducting research. With the exception of the director and some members of the board, the organization was run by non-locals. The majority of migrants and asylum seekers at Compromiso and Casa Asunción came from Central America while the minority was constituted by people from Mexico, Brazil, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola and Cameroon.

Funding for Casa Asunción mainly comes in the form of in kind and monetary donations. The organization does not apply for grants because Marcos, the director, and the board want to maintain control of the vision, goals and operations of the shelter. This

has given the organization great flexibility in serving migrants of all kinds, including undocumented ones. This also means that the organization is completely dependent on volunteers to run the shelter. The board of directors is also non-funded, and comprised of some former volunteers. Marcos receives a modest sum of money as do volunteers who commit to volunteer for more than one year. In theory housing and food are covered by the shelter: volunteers have to live there and they can eat what guests eat. However, they can also buy their own food. They are also free to use clothes from the clothing bank, which most do but not exclusively. Most volunteers are from the middle classes, have gone or are going to college, and can afford not to work for a summer or a year. This means that they are capable of paying for any emergency that may arise. They can also leave the shelter whenever they want.

I chose these nonprofit organizations because they were at the frontlines of migrant care provision during my field work--and they continue to be. I was given access as a participant observer *precisely because* these organizations needed volunteers, indicating that a lack of resources and mounting workloads factored in organizational dynamics. Further, choosing these organizations and working in them allowed me a range of experiences, all towards the same goal: helping migrants at the border.

Both nonprofit organizations have been operating for more than 30 years, adapting to the changes in immigration laws and resource availability throughout their years of existence. Both organizations provide different services and require different organizational practices from staff and volunteers. Caregivers' backgrounds in each organization were also different: Most staff members and volunteers at Compromiso

were Mexican-American women while at Casa Asunción most were white middle-class college graduates and retired men and women or clergy people. There is a preponderance of women working and volunteering at both organizations. Only in rare and short periods of time, such as particular summers, is the gender composition equal.

Staff members and volunteers first hear about Compromiso and Casa Asunción through college professors, friends, acquaintances, volunteer programs, or because they know someone who received help. In fact, many staff members at both organizations begin as volunteers. They quickly learn about the challenge of staying on top of increasing amounts of cases of varying degrees of difficulty. The unpredictable number of volunteers that organizations may receive, with different types and levels of skill, also makes it difficult to establish a reliable system of supervision. Supervisors are often busy meeting with clients, at conferences or meetings, in court, or out sick. Additionally, the increasing use of negative discretion in immigration enforcement, bureaucratic mistakes, and an uncooperative attitude from some officials and judges, makes work uncertain and frustrating. Meanwhile, clients get anxious about their cases and call the office constantly or, in the other extreme, cooperate sparingly.

Thus, people in both organizations work under pressure and with few resources in order to help migrants. However, the composition of staffs as well as the organizational practices are different. It follows, then, that the organizational spaces were categorically different as well. The shelter is mostly a domestic space while the legal aid office is organized as a professional setting.

METHODOLOGY

This project was conducted through an in-depth qualitative investigation, comprising six months of participant observation at Compromiso and in-depth interviews with over 20 staff members and volunteers; and seven months of participant observation at Casa Asunción and in-depth interviews with over 20 staff members and volunteers.

My relationship with El Paso, Texas is also important for this research. I was born in Chihuahua City, Mexico, a city 400 kilometers south of El Paso. As part of an incipient, but fragile, middle class in the city, I remember going to El Paso as a child to shop with my family. I would go on to spend my formative years in El Paso, attending middle and high school on the east side of the city. I left for Washington, D.C. to study International Politics when I was eighteen. I wanted to go to a national university in a different setting and the East Coast offered that.

Through the years I would go back to El Paso for the summer and winter holidays. I have family and friends there. However, conducting research in El Paso was like getting to know another city. During my fieldwork I spent most of my time around or in downtown El Paso. I rarely visited this area when I lived there because it is in decay and would mostly be populated by government buildings, stores selling cheap imports, and lower income housing.

Downtown El Paso is heavily Mexican and Mexican American, but it has also hosted Chinese immigrants in the early 20th Century. In 2006, the city government began efforts to revitalize downtown. This process has been slow. When I was conducting fieldwork, these efforts were met with criticism. Part of the revitalization plan included

building a sports arena in a neighborhood known as Duranguito. The arena would displace residents and businesses in the area, so activists and community organizations protested—they blocked the bulldozing of a building—while attorneys filed an injunction.

When I began my preliminary fieldwork, I, along with other volunteers, received tours of downtown and surrounding areas from nonlocals working at the shelter. This was an odd reversal of the strange and the familiar, but the fact was they knew this part of the city better than I did. They frequented the bus station, knew which were the best grocery stores or bakeries, and what entertainment events to attend. I was also unfamiliar with immigration laws and enforcement practices, which nonlocals also taught me. It felt as if I did not really know El Paso.

On the other hand, I was familiar with the cultural characteristics of the place. I am a fluent Mexican Spanish speaker. I had spent enough time in El Paso, Washington, D.C. and Austin, Texas, to feel comfortable among volunteers, paralegals, attorneys, and most migrants and asylum seekers. For example, I could understand a lot of the slang and inside jokes among teenagers in the shelter, but also engage with the cultural references of the college students volunteering at the legal aid office. In this sense, with a foot in both worlds, I was well placed to conduct this research.

Nonetheless, I am a cisgender male, aged 30 at the time of my fieldwork, while most of the research participants were women of all ages. As a result, I did not feel completely comfortable intruding in casual conversations that would start in whispers and break off in laughter.

I began conducting preliminary research in the summer of 2016. I initially intended to conduct the bulk of my research at Casa Asunción. The shelter is a prominent aid organization in El Paso, particularly among networks of Catholic churches in the city. I had heard about assistance efforts to migrants through my mother and an aunt. I remember vague descriptions about organizing donations to immigrant children in undisclosed shelter locations. By this time, I had read about the Solidarity Movement in the US and thought the secrecy was because of an underground railroad. Later I realized these shelters were for unaccompanied children under the custody of subcontracted NGOs working for the Department of Homeland Security. Nonetheless, this prompted me to see if I could find out more information about migrant shelters in El Paso. The first result in my search engine was Casa Asunción. I called the organization's office and left a message, but nothing came of it. I continued calling, once every week for about a month and a half when suddenly, in the middle of a discussion section I was conducting as a Teaching Assistant, the director of the shelter, Marcos, returned my calls.

He told me of the migrant crisis that he faces every day, of the urgency of the situation. He told me stories of people escaping violence and persecution in Mexico and Guatemala and of the difficulties experienced once they get to the United States. They are often persecuted in their home countries, detained in the US when they get here, and often subsequently deported. The public here, he told me, does not help. Marcos expressed his concern that those interested in studying shelters and refugees only seek self-gain. Furthermore, the news or investigative stories written with the intention of influencing the public often become inconsequential. They never ask their lawyer friends

to help or if they do, the lawyer friends never get in touch with the shelter. The director was tired of this. “We are burned out,” he kept saying. He wanted me to understand that academic writing was not helpful. That I should not go to a shelter to study solidarity.

Having been exposed to participatory action research and activist research methods as an MA student in Latin American Studies, I felt I had to agree with him. Marcos’ claims resonated with what I had learned in graduate school. I tried to communicate my willingness apply these methods, but he was not interested. After discussing the situation with my advisor, we decided I should still go to El Paso. I applied as a summer volunteer in the shelter, a lengthy process requiring a long application, an interview by a board member, and criminal and medical checks. During my interview I asked about the possibility of doing research there and was told it was all up to Marcos. When the summer was over, I asked Marcos again. Once again, he refused to let me conduct an ethnography but allowed me to interview volunteers. This summer experience was valuable because I learned how the shelter worked and the dynamics between Department of Homeland Security and community organizations.

The following year I returned to El Paso to conduct the bulk of my field work. Like the previous year, I applied as a summer volunteer with an organization helping migrants on the legal front, Compromiso. During the interview process, I explained my research and without hesitation the director accepted my request to conduct my field work there. I was shocked with the contrast in access. Afterwards, I explained my research to summer volunteers and staff members who agreed to participate.

Before starting my research, I also applied to a third organization in El Paso that conducted research and organized youth leadership trainings. I was afraid I would only have access to Compromiso and wanted to expand the scope of experiences I captured. The organization was part of the Diocese of El Paso, so it was involved in many of the Catholic church's initiatives in advocating for immigrants. I was hired and worked as a research assistant documenting the almost universal impossibility of gaining asylum in the El Paso region. While this part of my field work is not represented in this dissertation, it was helpful in getting to know participants in the immigrant rights movement and gaining more perspective on the political dynamics in the city.

That summer of 2017 I again tried to gain access at Casa Asunción. I texted Marcos and he was confused because he thought I was done with my research. Later, in October he tentatively accepted on the condition that I agree to be interviewed by a board member with research experience. During this meeting I explained my project and allayed concerns about the intrusiveness of my research. Marcos was concerned that I would go around with a notepad writing everything I saw and heard. Marcos was aware of the negative emotions, and perhaps inappropriate comments, that volunteers could make. He knew this happened at the shelter as in other stressful experiences working with people. According to Marcos, this was part of the process towards volunteers' inner growth. So, understandably, he did not want me to interrupt the experience by making volunteers feel uncomfortable. My response was that he was right in feeling concerned, but that the last thing I wanted to do was to be disruptive. My note taking would always be behind closed doors and that I would not share work with volunteers that could create

any problems. I explained that the research process was long; that I would probably take one to two years to analyze all my notes and interviews. I did, however, tell him that I would talk to the volunteer community to explain how I would conduct the ethnography and that if anyone did not want to participate, I would leave them out of it. When I ended up having this conversation with volunteers, none of them opted out. On the contrary, they engaged me and my work by continually asking questions and joking about how they would be portrayed in my work.

With both Casa Asunción and Compromiso, I was granted access because the need for volunteers at these organizations is so great. While I was part of a cohort of seven summer volunteers at Compromiso in 2017, I was the only one that stayed for the fall. I used my research experience to help with asylum cases. At Casa Asunción, the need for volunteers was worrisome. The shelter would sometimes function with just four or five volunteers, meaning more shifts per week and higher risks of burnout. This was a major factor in Marcos accepting me as a volunteer and researcher. The lack of resources to hire or recruit volunteers and staff members shapes many of the solidarity practices I observed.

My field work at Compromiso consisted of participant observation. This meant that I was working as any of the other volunteers would. I wrote country conditions summaries for court cases; translated documents; called family members to help gather evidence for cases; visited asylum seekers at the detention center; organized case files; shredded old case files; attended staff and community meetings; and ran errands. This list is not exhaustive, but it provides a good idea of what I and the others did.

At the end of the summer, Sister Constance left Compromiso. Sr. Constance was the intake specialist who visited detainees to conduct interviews for determining eligibility for services, among other things. I was offered her position and a stipend for my work, which I accepted. At this time, I had also made a commitment with the Diocese organization, so I did not go to Compromiso every day. A month into my new position, Sister Caroline joined me as the second intake specialist. Sister Caroline had worked as a chaplain in the detention center so she had some experience with the place. However, I helped her get acquainted with our intake forms, computer programs, and whatever came up. Both Sisters received their income from their religious orders, not Compromiso. I continued working with Compromiso until the second week of January 2018, for a total of seven months, after which I began working at Casa Asunción.

As intake specialist at Compromiso, I visited detainees who were clients or potential clients. These visits mostly involved gathering information and signatures from detainees. During my field work I visited migrants in three detention centers in the El Paso area: El Paso Service Processing Service, Otero County Processing Center, and West Texas Detention Facility. The process of gaining entrance is especially cumbersome and frustrating at the El Paso processing center. The detention center is inside a compound housing the Border Patrol headquarters and ICE's Field Office. Limited parking for attorneys and paralegals inside the compound often means we have to park outside and walk up to two blocks (most of the time under the hot sun). Once inside, one often has to wait for guards to bring the detainee to the visiting area. I quickly became acquainted with the timings of the center. Detainees had breakfast early in the morning.

Guards “counted” detainees at around 10 AM and 1:30 PM. Therefore, the best time to make visits was before the morning count and before their lunch. Requesting to see detainees during counts or meals could mean waiting for up to an hour. I also asked to see as many detainees as possible, which was five. Interviews lasted anywhere from 10 minutes to an hour. These interviews were mentally and emotionally exhausting, but because of high demand, I felt an obligation to screen as many people as possible.

Every evening I returned to my mother’s house where I lived during the first half of my research. There I would have dinner and then write my fieldnotes. These field notes were based on memory about the events and conversations of the day, and from notes I would make in a notebook through the day. I also recorded audio notes on my drive back home or if I was feeling too tired at night. I recorded all press conferences and public events, and took notes in every meeting I attended.

At Casa Asunción I attempted to replicate this notetaking system, but it was more difficult. Living in the shelter meant that I was always on call to help. I tried to write field notes every day, but this was not always possible because I would often feel exhausted or sick from the work. The most intense work happened when I was on shift. Fortunately, the office area---a desk in the corner of an open prep area reserved for volunteers and connecting the food pantry, small kitchen/clinic, office and a narrow hallway—had plenty of small sheets of paper for notetaking. I collected notes on these sheets and later reviewed them to write my field notes.

Volunteers at Casa Asunción have four main roles. The most strenuous is being on shift. Each shift is eight hours long, from 7AM to 2PM and from 2PM to 10PM.

However, the person on shift during the afternoon/night also does night cover, which means they sleep in a small room next to the clinic/kitchen, ready to respond to any emergencies. During shifts, volunteers are "in charge" of the house, and coordinate all activities and tasks during that time. Volunteers are also assigned to cases. They periodically meet with long- and short-term guests to come up with a plan and check on their progress. Plans mostly deal with moving on to another city or state, if their final destination is not El Paso. If they are to remain in El Paso, they also need a plan to stay elsewhere after a period of time at the shelter, as decided by the house coordinator or director. In their meetings with guests, volunteers also cover how the guest is faring in the shelter; address any medical concerns; discuss conflicts with other guests; or address discipline problems in the case of the teenagers.

Volunteers are assigned two sets of shelter duties. One set deals with major maintenance tasks, such as keeping the clothing bank organized or organizing food donations in the pantries. This set is usually the same throughout volunteers' stints. The other set changes every week and involves cleaning the volunteer kitchen, bathrooms, or sala (living room). Since 2014, the task of helping with ICE releases has been added to this set. Almost every week day during my field work, including the summer of 2016, ICE would release anywhere between two to 60 asylum seekers traveling as family units. While ICE tries to detain all asylum seekers, ICE cannot detain accompanied children in adult detention centers, and there are only three family detentions centers in the country, one in Pennsylvania and two in Texas. So, ICE releases those family units with family or friends in the United States who are willing to house them while the family units finish

their immigration cases. The volunteer on shift coordinates the intake process and travel arrangement for ICE releasees, with the help of a group of three or four volunteers. This is the last formal task.

There is *a lot* happening in the shelter at certain times, and nothing at others. Much of what happens each week is discussed by all of the volunteer community on Monday morning. The whole group meets in one of the houses, reads a set of readings, reflects with the group about anything that is on their mind, whether joyous or painful, challenging or fun, and then we share bread. The format is reminiscent of a Catholic mass, with the content altered. While we all have breakfast together, Marcos, house coordinators, and volunteers make announcements, and we go around the table giving updates on the guests assigned to each of us. It was at one of these weekly meetings that I explained my research project and asked for consent from the volunteer community.

I conducted 51 in-depth interviews with shelter volunteers, legal staff, and activists from different organizations during my total fieldwork period of 15 months (of which two months were preliminary fieldwork). I usually waited a few months after knowing individuals before I asked them for an interview. I did this to build rapport with them, so they could feel comfortable talking with me. I also wanted to ask them specific questions about events or situations that I would not have known about if I had not been working alongside them for a while. When I finally conducted the interviews, the answers were highly reflexive in nature. Even though I was extracting information from participants, many still thanked me for asking them about their work. The interview quotes I analyze in this article are unedited in order to illustrate this reflexivity. Showing

verbal missteps, silences, laughter, or halting syntax helps analysis "go beyond *what* people say to *how* they say it" (Pugh 2013, p. 54). The accounts people give of their motives reveal the cultural meaning of care, and what is and is not valued by their society (Wuthnow 1991).

I began all my interviews by asking participants how they got to Compromiso or Casa Asunción. I asked about their backgrounds and when they started getting involved with social justice efforts. I asked about the challenges and joys of their work in either organization, prompting them to provide specific examples. Many times, participants answered questions with stories. Each interview ended up being different because of the different topics that emerged. I also asked about what they wanted to do in the future and if they would recommend coming to the border to help to their friends. My attempt was always to come back to the same set of interview questions for everyone. In a few cases though, we would run out of time.

ON TERMINOLOGY

Three brief notes on terminology. First, I use the term "immigrant rights movement" to describe a loose network of social movement organizations, coalitions, collectives, service providers, and individuals that advocate, protest, and care for migrants' rights in the United States and elsewhere. This broad movement is not centralized and has varying levels of activity, depending on the political context of the time. As Marquez and Jennings (2000) note, grassroots organizations are fundamental in the mobilization of Mexican American interests. While the movement organizations in El

Paso are led mostly by Mexican Americans, now a significant number of the clients are Central American because they cross the border through or near El Paso. Central Americans seldom stay in El Paso, though. The story is different in cities such as Los Angeles, Houston, or Washington, D.C. where Central American populations, especially Guatemalans and Salvadoreans, are greater and denser. While such a broad conception of social movements might prevent me from making claims about the movement's history or progression, as Gonzales (2013) or Nicolls (2019) have done, it gives me the space to study the practices and emotional dynamics of different types of organizations comprising the movement.

Second, throughout the dissertation I use the terms "migrants and asylum seekers" or simply "migrants" to refer to a broad group of people who may have been displaced, who may intend to immigrate to the United States, might be seeking asylum, or may seek to migrate to the US for a specific period of time. Because it is difficult to know what their intentions are or how their cases will develop, I simplified my categories for them. I use "migrant" because it is the most inclusive term to denote the individuals who move across borders and "asylum seekers" because of their unique status, making them easy to identify as they seek very specific and brief services and care. I also use the term "clients" to refer to migrants in the context of Compromiso and "guests" in Casa Asunción's case. These are terms used in my field sites by movement participants, so I have kept them.

Finally, I use the terms caregiver and care receiver to refer to movement participants and migrants, respectively. Caregiver is what I call movement participants

because a significant part of their work is to care about, care for, and give care to migrants and asylum seekers. This conceptual turn is an effort to foreground the caring practices so prevalent in the movement and thus to make clear what the everyday work of this movement looked like. Care receiver is used sparingly, mostly in Chapter 3, where I discuss the co-production of care between giver and receiver.

STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

In the next chapter I begin the substantive sections of my dissertation. Chapter Three begins with the historical context of care to migrants in El Paso, Texas. I take a multifaceted view of practice, by looking at how caregivers and other stakeholders in migration care about, facilitate resources, and provide face-to-face care to migrants. The first chapter analyzes the politics of caring about migrants in three distinct spaces to which I had access due to my roles as a shelter volunteer and paralegal: a migrant shelter, the El Paso County Judge's court, and a detention center for migrants. Across these spaces, accompaniment—a Christian practice of being company to someone undergoing a difficult time—frames care against a backdrop of resource-scarcity. Leaders try to create or maintain spaces of care in El Paso, and these spaces control the movement of migrants to varying degrees of severity. This chapter sets the stage to understand how the legal aid office and shelter come to be such stressed sites.

In Chapter Four I document the frustration emerging among caregivers as they interact with the state, their organizations, and migrants themselves. I find that these caregivers employ selective frameworks for accepting cases, both for legal representation

and shelter/hospitality needs. Caregivers at the legal aid office take on cases that are the most likely to win, while the shelter takes in individuals or families that are easier to control. Parsing through cases to determine which ones to accept—what I term 'case selectivity'—allows these organizations to effectively employ their limited resources in a way that helps as many people as possible, without compromising on the quality of care.

In Chapter Five I analyze how caregivers become attached to their work. I argue that "feeling needed" is a result of mostly simple and repetitive tasks involved in care. A qualitative shift in caregiving takes hold when aesthetic component to care. The "care effect" (Browne 2010) introduces pleasure in the co-production of care between caregiver and receiver. However, the care effect is not a guaranteed product in these interactions. Negative and ambivalent emotions also emerge in caring interactions. Nonetheless, these negative emotions also allow caregivers to reflect on their work and their relationships with migrants and asylum seekers, strengthening their attachments.

In Chapter Six I show the consequences of feeling needed. The first part of this chapter analyzes how the specific caregiving practices of each organization shape the morality that keeps care workers committed. Despite the differences between the two spaces, I find caregivers draw on what I call familial moralities to frame their attachments. At the shelter, caregivers feel as if migrants were family while at the legal office caregivers interpret their family histories through the cases they encounter. In the second part I look at how caregivers are pushed to the point of burnout. Persisting in these trying conditions requires caregivers to cultivate what I call "detached attachment". Contrary to the idea that strong attachments to work lead to long commitments, I find that

caregivers reduce the intensity of their attachments to migrants in order to remain engaged and cope with burnout.

Chapter 3. Caring About Migrants and the Idea of Accompaniment

This chapter is about how the politics of "caring about" migrants and asylum seekers manifests in different organizations in El Paso, Texas. I will introduce two important spaces in my research—the migrant shelter and detention center—while also providing context to the local politics of migration in El Paso. In these spaces, actors claim to care about migrants, and while this is demonstrably untrue in the case of the detention center, they are all communicating that in order to care for migrants, they should be physically close to those doing the "caring." In other words, the agency and movement of migrants needs to be limited to be able to care for them. I continue this theme on control over migrants' movement in Chapter Four as well.

Having travelled anywhere between days and months and then being subjected to enhanced immigration control in the United States, migrants and asylum seekers have an array of needs. The strategy and politics behind caring for those needs illustrate the foundations of care given in the social context of the border. According to Fisher and Tronto (1990), "caring about" is an orientation, disposition, or affection towards something or someone, requiring knowledge about that object. They write that it "involves selection. Limitation in time, knowledge, skills, and resources impinge on our caring about, forcing us to make choices" (p.42). First, caring about migrants and asylum seekers involves orientations as to why they should be helped: Casa Asunción is interested in providing respite and accompaniment after long journeys to the United States and the treatment at the border; local politicians are interested in projecting a migration-friendly image of El Paso which complements its strong link to Mexico and

U.S. liberal political ideologies[1]; and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) wants to improve its tarnished pubic image while enforcing immigration policy to the fullest extent of the law.

Second, how to provide this care becomes just as important. "Caring about" involves planning for human and material resources needed for caregiving. Migrants and asylum seekers need a place to stay, food to eat, and medical attention in some cases--it needs people to manage the provision of care. Underlying "caring about", then, is strategy. I will use Michel de Certeau's (1984) conception of strategy, which he defines as the will and power to manipulate relationships within a specific isolable social field that can interact with other fields. In this case, "caring about" means creating and sustaining spaces for migrants. The use of strategies means that caregivers are making choices about resources and time in order to achieve their goals.

Here, I analyze what organization representatives care about when dealing with migrants and asylum seekers. The first section follows a tour of Casa Asunción which describes its basic operations. Then I turn to the debate over renting local jails to federal immigration agencies detaining migrants and asylum seekers. At the end of the chapter, I return to another tour, this time of detention centers in the El Paso area.

All of these spaces deploy discourses of caring about migrants and asylum seekers. The politics of these discourses vary depending on the space from which they emerge. Fox (1995) described the dual nature of care work as "the vigil of care" and "the gift of care" to talk about the different discourses that can emerge from within one space,

[1] Here I am referring to progressive politics of liberal Democrats.

such as a hospital. The vigil of care highlights how care can be a disciplining force that wields experiential and professional knowledge, while the *"*gift of care*"* corresponds to the "love, generosity, trust and delight" that comes with the work (p. 108). These distinctions embedded in care work lead to contradictions, such as "radical caring" in racialized communities where care includes the mobilization of ideologies and power in ways that undermine the objectives of care (Rudrappa 2004). These contradictions are not only inherent in caregiving—they also work through spaces of care. The resources available and social context affect "caring about" just as much as the individual motivations of caregivers. Explaining the creation or use of spaces ultimately specifies the politics of "caring about" in those spaces—the strategy. In other words, it highlights the choices made to provide care—what buildings are going to be used and how they will be organized; procurement of resources; length of shifts, etc.—and what that means to caregivers.

ASSISTANCE TO MIGRANTS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN EL PASO

Community members in El Paso have continually volunteered to help migrants passing through the city. On Christmas eve and Christmas day 2018, ICE released about 400 asylum seekers to a Greyhound station in downtown El Paso. Aside from admitting that they "dropped the ball" and that the federal government was in a shutdown, no clear reason was given to the public about this incident. Nonetheless, religious organizations and the City of El Paso responded, providing food, shelter and transportation to families with no means to support themselves (Romo 2018). Along with its welcoming

personality, the city is known for its safety, constantly ranking among the safest in the country, and its transnational character which encompasses social, economic, and political relations across the border. Even Republican elites in El Paso, for example, criticized the misinformation spread by President Trump about the border wall being necessary for El Paso's safety (Romero 2019). The international border is not only a local matter, though, but a federal one that reduces local leaders' and communities' control over the boundary. The recent increase in families migrating and seeking asylum through El Paso (mostly Central Americans) has made it difficult for local political leaders to address the needs of both (extra)local constituencies and policies from Washington D.C. These policies attempt to increase security, strengthening border surveillance, but negatively impact migrants, transnational commuters, families, businesses, and the environment (Eschbach, Hagan and Rodriguez 2003; Ackleson 2003; Olmedo and Soden 2005; Cunningham 2004)

Immigration is controlled by federal agencies operating in El Paso, and the organizations providing assistance to migrants. The latter have direct or indirect ties to religious organizations: Casa Asunción is a faith-based organization founded with the support of the Catholic Diocese of El Paso. Many of its volunteers and staff members identify with Catholicism, mainline Protestantism or Judaism. Compromiso is an offshoot nonprofit from Casa Asunción with some members identifying as religious or part of a religious order. The religious basis, specifically Catholic, of many efforts to help migrants in El Paso is no coincidence. Over 345,000 individuals out of 800,000 identify as Catholic in El Paso, by far the largest religious group in the city (Association of

Religious Data Archives, 2010). Catholic missions were established in the El Paso region in the late 17th Century (Wright 2002). During the Cristero War in Mexico in the 1920s the Diocese in El Paso hosted hundreds of nuns, priests, seminarians, and members of the church hierarchy fleeing the violence. Religious refugees like these were channeled through the Immigration Bureau of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) located in El Paso. This office became the clearing house for all Catholics immigrating to the United States, and the primary organization for Mexican religious refugees, with the intention of keeping the rising number of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. Catholic (Young 2012). For instance, on June 18, 1927, 5000 individuals attended a reception honoring Mexican bishops exiled in the United States, and the following day 35,000 people demonstrated in support of refugees (Young 2012)—a sizable number even by today's standards. This legacy of Catholic charity to refugees in El Paso continues. The surge in family units seeking asylum intensified between October 2018 and May 2019, with the El Paso Border Patrol seeing a 1,698 percent increase in family unit apprehensions (U.S. Customs and Border Protection). By April 2019, Casa Asunción, through its network of faith-based organizations and volunteers, was receiving between 500 and 600 asylum seekers each day.

ACCOMPANIMENT: A FAITH-BASED STRATEGY FOR CARE

"Caring about" is about making choices—what to care about—especially when the resources for caregiving are limited. For organizations in El Paso, this is critical due to their nonprofit status and limited funding sources. At the same time, much of the

assistance provided to migrants is inspired by religious themes that hinge on resource-scarcity, the most important being "accompaniment." Accompaniment is a pastoral practice attributed to Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), cofounder of the Jesuit order, in which clergy people provide care and consolation to the sick and dying. Accompaniment is not meant to heal, but rather, support in the "art of living and dying" (Sievernich 2003, p.31). With the emergence of Liberation Theology, pastoral accompaniment became a practice in Latin America during the Cold War. Clergy people interpreted religious teachings in the context of the social, political, and economic problems afflicting peasants and the urban poor. This practice is symbolically defined as walking with or standing with the oppressed, poor, or sick, without leading or controlling their objectives or strategies.[2] Another Jesuit, Pedro Arrupe, coined the term "preferential option for the poor" in 1968 to connote a similar idea, one that resonates with the work of faith-based organizations today (Dault 2015). In fact, much of the work done with Central American asylum seekers in the United States under the aegis of Liberation theology sees itself as a response to the social conditions that drive current migration patterns.

According to Roberto Goizueta (1995), at the center of the preferential option for the poor is an identification with the poor. Emotionally connecting with the poor is the basis for understanding the injustice of poverty and racism. By identifying with the poor,

[2] Schaper (1984) likens it to a musical accompaniment and the Jesuit Refugee Service sees it as establishing genuine, compassionate relationships with service recipients (Hampson et al. 2014). Paul Farmer (2011) promotes accompaniment as a form of "long-term social support" that improves health outcomes in impoverished neighborhoods, cities or regions lacking fundamental services and infrastructure. Accompaniment also became a United Nations resettlement strategy after Guatemala's civil war. Foreign, private citizens and NGOs accompanied refugees back to their communities, using their presence to reduce harassment and persecution of refugees, and providing services and basic infrastructure for the return (Levitt 1999). Organizations such as Witness for Peace currently recruit individuals to accompany activists and other threatened groups in their countries (Witness for Peace).

Goizueta argues, one builds solidarity with them, which itself constitutes an act of protest against inequality. An affective relationship with the poor also recognizes the spatial character of marginalization. Accompaniment, Goizueta continues, should be practiced in public and private spaces because oppression not only occurs through the exclusionary function of borders/divisions, but in the connections obscured between these spaces. "Walking with" as articulated by Goizueta requires transgressing geographical boundaries, be it city-suburb or United States-Mexico, through an emotional and physical presence in the space of transgression, in the "*here-there*" (de Certeau 1984, p. 99). In this way, accompaniment as a spatial practice reduces physical and social distance, challenges status quo, and builds solidarity with marginalized people.

The state too is interested in reducing its distance from migrants and asylum seekers. Through legislation, the state apparatus is charged with both monitoring migrants and caring for asylum seekers and refugees. Ironically, as service providers, both nonprofits and the state share in their practical need for space. In fact, this is the main way nonprofits and the state provide care. However, the different spaces created to hold or house migrants and asylum seekers also generate different politics of caring about migrants. This chapter will look at the politics of three spaces for migrants and asylum seekers in the El Paso region. I use tours as heuristic tools to illustrate the politics of caring. I find that all interventions in care deal with managing the isolation or movement of migrants and asylum seekers. However, the three models of "caring about" I present have varying material consequences for migrants.

ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOMPANIMENT IN CASA ASUNCIÓN

Casa Asunción is a three-storied, red brick building with white doors and rotting wooden awnings. The once-pharmacy is wedged between two streets and a parking-lot, giving it a characteristic triangular shape. The building is on the outskirts of downtown El Paso, where dilapidated apartment buildings, industrial warehouses, and turn-of-the century houses turned into law offices meet. In this architectural context, Casa Asunción can look like any other building, but upon walking inside, a wild mixture of colors, sounds and smells greets you. "This may sound weird," shared Sylvia, a year-long volunteer from the South, as she described her decision to volunteer, "but I think the building is beautiful…it's so unique…I've never been in a place like that. That is sort of like this weird maze and is so colorful. You hear many languages and dialects and different smells every day…it's in such a unique physical space as well…everything was so new, it felt so good and so exciting…and I think I had never felt like, 'this feels *right*, this feels *good.*'"

According to the shelter's website, the house belonged to the Catholic Diocese of El Paso and when the second floor became vacant, it was lent to a group of young people who met weekly to pray and discuss the Gospel and how to live according to its teachings. They moved in to the building in 1978. They settled on living in solidarity with the poor, even though they did not know how exactly to do this. They began by living in community without wages in order to understand the instability of poverty. Eventually, requests to host individual homeless individuals were being made, leading to the decision to help this specific population. They witnessed a lack of services available

to undocumented homeless people, which led them to narrow the group's mission. They decided to provide hospitality to the poorest of the poor in El Paso, those who did not have access to any social services. While the group did not have many resources, the organization provided support to help guests improve their situation. In this sense, Casa Asuncion incorporated an accompaniment framework. By providing a space to stay, volunteers accompany migrants in difficult situations so that migrants can decide and take action about what to do next.

College, high school, and church groups from El Paso and all around the country visit Casa Asunción as part of border immersion trips. The border immersion program is educational and at the same time, an opportunity to recruit, or at least spike the interest of, potential volunteers. Some groups only tour the house while others stay for a week or longer. The tour of Casa Asunción is an assigned task for volunteers, and everyone gets the opportunity to conduct it. It is scripted, so it is a fairly standard representation of the organization, but there is ample opportunity for tour leaders to add things they find interesting.

All tours begin in the front door as visitors enter the house. As they wait to go inside, the groups present a contrast with local residents. Most visitors wear shorts and Chacos sandals; they carry water bottles of all sizes to ward off dehydration in the desert sun. Visitors awkwardly walk through the *sala* (living room) dodging toys and children, saying hi to guests sitting on couches in low voices as if to not intrude too much, and exclaiming with relief as they feel the AC. Visitors are led to an office area with high ceilings crisscrossed with air vents and water pipes. The dark concrete floor is visible

through a green layer of paint that is peeling off in busy areas. Forming a back drop to food donations set on tables, a collage of candid pictures shows memorable and smiling volunteers and guests.

Over the incessant humming of an industrial refrigerator, the designated tour guide, Sylvia, introduces herself and provides a general history of the house. Typically, at this point, the guide also talks about how the house operates, who it hosts, and the economic and political contexts of migration to and through El Paso. “Everything is on donation basis. One of the things that the director and the people who started the organization were very intentional about,” Sylvia explains to a group of college students, “was that they didn’t want any money that had strings attached…so we don’t apply for grants from big foundations; we don’t take government money.” A quick roundabout walk through the pantry area triggers the scripted question, “Does anyone know why our main source of meat is turkey?” Visitors can usually guess that it is Thanksgiving donations result in copious amounts of turkey for the shelter. Part of volunteers’ routines includes making sure there is always a turkey defrosting in the refrigerator or one cooking in the volunteers’ kitchen. Waking up to the smell of cooking turkey became normal for me as my room was next to the kitchen. Eating a lot of turkey becomes a component of living in solidarity with the poor.

Casa Asunción’s initial group’s intention was to find meaning and purpose in life, to figure out “why you are taking up space in the world,” as Marcos, the director and founder, likes to say. The experience is described in spiritual and religious terms to volunteers during orientation, much to the dismay of non-religious or non-Christian

volunteers. Yet, because the shelter is at the forefront of major immigration issues providing direct assistance, it attracts progressive youth. Thus, even though Marcos calling the experience a way to find one's calling may not bode well with these volunteers, they cannot deny the commitment, and to a certain extent, radical nature of the shelters' mission. At a fundraising event where Marcos was encouraging churches to provide hospitality to asylum seekers, he promised the crowd that they would be changed after spending time volunteering and interacting with "the poor in migration." Helping migrants, he likes to say, is how he chooses to take up space.

Today, Casa Asunción serves three groups of poor migrants: individuals crossing without inspection with the intention of working in El Paso or elsewhere in the United States; family units (usually with one parent) released from ICE due to a lack of space in detention; and women and children collecting Social Security benefits accrued by deceased family members. This third group of guests is mostly Mexican women and children whose partner or father worked in the US. They must either spend one whole month in the US every six months to receive Social Security payments, or check in at the Social Security office once every month. The main house, Casa Asunción, shelters all three groups while Casa Vida, another house of the same organization, focuses on Social Security guests and ICE releases when needed. Casa Asunción began its operations in the late 1970s providing shelter to the homeless, but it became clear that undocumented migrants were in most need because other homeless shelters required Social Security numbers.

The tour continues as the guide walks down a set of screechy wooden stairs into the dark, cool basement where cleaning supplies, toiletries, mountains of donated clothes, canned food, and piles of new toys for Christmas are stored. The guide leads the group across a door-less doorway, to the clothing bank where items and shoes have been arranged by gender and size, and a distinct thrift-store smell fills the air. “All guests get one change of clothing when they arrive and if they are long-term guests, they may get up to three or four” Sylvia explains as she goes over the intake process, “they just have to let their contact volunteer know.”

All long-term and Social Security guests are assigned a contact volunteer who functions like a case worker. They interview the guest to gather as much information as possible from them. Where are they coming from? Where are they going? How are they going to get there? What did they do in their country of origin? Do they have family in the U.S.? Do they have any medical conditions that the shelter should know about? Ultimately, the contact volunteer is in-charge of coming up with a plan with the guest in order to ensure the potential guest can fit in the shelters’ routines, and to establish a departure date. The contact volunteer should also establish a connection with the guest in order to talk through problems that may arise in the shelter.

Up through another set of steep stairs, the tour group reaches the ground floor at the foot of a flight of yellow stairs. The yellow stairway leads up to a mural of Our Lady of Guadalupe flanked by two halls. “After guests do intake and they’ve gotten clothes,” Sylvia continues, “I take them up here,”. She leads them through one of the two halls, flanked by closets under lock and key that are full of linen, blankets, and towels. “I give

them a towel and everything for their bed and then we take them to their bed." Sylvia walks through the hall to a family dorm, a row of rooms with names of different Latin American countries "This is the family dorm. No men are allowed here, only teens up to 17. There's seven rooms I believe and they are kind of crammed…" Each of the rooms has either one or two sets of bunk beds.

The sound of the squeaking floorboards announces the group's movement up yet another set of stairs, up to the roof--the place where guests dry clothes and get away from authority figures. From there one can see a large part of central El Paso and Ciudad Juarez, giving a great layout of the metropolitan area. Sylvia, and other volunteers, take this opportunity to provide a quick sketch of the surroundings. "The editor of El Diario has a house over there, the mayor of Juarez has a house there. The narcos have houses over there as well. We do have a detention center and a courthouse over there. Usually they don't house migrants at [that] detention center…" Here, a visitor asks what kind of support Casa Asunción gives migrants who are continuing their journey north. "We share with them," Sylvia explains, quoting herself speaking to guests, "'these are things that can happen, these are some things that people have done in the past,'" . She elaborates, "people hop on trains, they may pay a coyote trying to cross the checkpoint, it really just varies…." Sylvia ends by clarifying that the shelter is not part of an underground railroad, but just a space where people can plan and save money for the next step of their journey. This cautious sharing of information with guests and visitors removes responsibility from the shelter. Careful wording and the odd inscrutable rule to reduce liability are part and parcel of volunteering at Casa Asunción.

At the end of the tour, groups are taken into the chapel on the second floor or the sun-filled volunteer living room in the narrowest part of the building for a Q and A session. “Why do you do this? How do you deal with all of this?” is a recurrent question from visitors. I observed many of these Q and A sessions with different volunteers serving as tour leaders. Sandra, a year-long volunteer from the northeast, answers that despite the traumatic experiences of guests, meeting them and seeing how generous and incredible they are motivates her. Sylvia loves seeing guests letting loose and relaxing in the house after having lived through difficult experiences. That makes the work rewarding for her.

In another such interaction, Patricio, a pleasant but reserved middle-aged volunteer, tells visitors:

> You have to find a way…so you say, ‘I’m a runner, I run 12 miles a day,’ and you say to me, ‘Oh, I’m a bike rider, I go biking off the hills.’ And maybe you don’t say anything to me and you draw in your room and you do whatever you need to, you meditate, write poetry. Everyone survives in one way or another. I think one thing about this project is there needs to be time to reflect…and unfortunately it is not built into the time frame…

Patricio then narrated an anecdote about a large, extended Mexican family fleeing a targeted attack on them by both police and gangs. The family was separated into two groups at the border when they requested asylum and subsequently released to Casa Asunción on different days. Patricio realized what was happening and informed both groups of the separated family that the others were all fine and on their way to their final

destination. “When that thing yesterday happened, I could talk to the sister, ‘I just talked to your mom, I just sent your sister on a plane, they are going to be reunited tomorrow’ and that was healing…that was healing.” This was the happiest I saw Patricio during our time together at the shelter.

Alice, a college graduate from the West Coast, likes to go on runs in order to relieve the stress from working in the house. She participated in a half-marathon and training for this event helped her cope with life in the house. Yet, the opportunities to disconnect are few because the boundaries between work and life are tenuous, as Alice explained to a tour group:

> …there is just a lot of things that come up with being with people that in other organizations you might consider them clients. That can get kind of confusing sometimes. Not like confusing, but it can get kind of weird… they don’t know when it’s my day off; or like, there is no clear distinction between work and living. I live in the family dorm so I’ve had people knock on my door to ask questions…this one time, this woman, her baby was sick and I didn’t know the baby was sick and it was like one in the morning and she was trying to get in my room but I didn’t know she was trying to get in my room… I woke up because someone was trying to open the door and the door was locked. I was kind of scared because it was one in the morning and someone was trying to open my door. And I didn’t know what to do until eventually she went downstairs and got some medication.

By removing the barriers between caring and “living,” one may even try to avoid helping, as I jokingly explained to the same group, “[you try to] disconnect when you don’t *have* to be here, working. Because being in the house automatically puts you in a place where, if people need you, you *have* to help out…so you can just leave the house or pretend you are asleep.” As a result, volunteers at Casa Asunción have to assess what to care about.

For example, Patricio, who would regularly take guests to the airport, would warn mothers about breastfeeding in public,

> And I say to them, when we get to the airport…"in America, breastfeeding is not okay. There are a lot of people in America who are going to look at you breastfeeding your child and say, 'that is really gross' and they are going to call an airline attendant over"…and the last thing this person really wants is an authority figure talking to them because their early experience with authority is bad news. So I say to them…'I got to explain to you, breastfeeding in the waiting room at the airport is just not going to go over well…so ask, go to the bathroom and do it…in this country, you can't be in a plane and breastfeed your child. The passenger next to you may get really upset. Ask the man or lady, where can I do that?'"

Caring about breastfeeding in public, whether because of the public's or Patricio's general anxiety about it[3], reveals expectations and judgements as to *what* we should care about. Caring about how others will react to mothers' breastfeeding, and how that reaction might impact the mothers, leads Patricio to have certain conversations which can also, in themselves, be upsetting, excessive, and a form of social control.

Accompaniment in Casa Asunción is shaped by a series of routines for both volunteers and guests. Rules are the first things covered during the intake for guests and orientation for volunteers. While the regulation of migrants' stay at the house is met with obstinacy by some volunteers, it sets expectations about how the shelter should work. According to Marcos and senior volunteers, the shelter's rules have stories behind them and are based on experience. Ultimately, this regimentation is able to produce a stable space for migrants to relax and meet their basic needs in the company of others.

Liminal accompaniment in El Paso County

[3] Breastfeeding in public is legal in all 50 states.

Victor Turner (1978) describes liminality as a "transition rite" marked by isolation or separation of an individual or group, "set aside from the main arenas of social life in a seclusion lodge or camp" after which, those in a liminal state reemerge into society and usually occupy a higher standing within it. Cecilia Menjívar (2006) built on this concept to describe the ambiguous legality of Central Americans with temporary protected status (TPS) in the United States. In this section, I will show how the politics of "caring about" manifest as "liminal accompaniment," illustrating how accompaniment is made possible by keeping migrants and asylum seekers in total institutions, close to those who want to accompany them. This space of accompaniment, that is, county jails and detention centers, and even migrant shelters are separated and isolated from El Pasoan society. Accompaniment, then, is suspended in a non-place. This non-place has a markedly ambiguous character, caught between the local and federal governments, and caught up in an uncertain legal future. Nonetheless, the experience of this non-place can go either way; it can bear real material gains if an attorney is able to help someone.

Since at least 1997, El Paso County has maintained a contract with the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) to hold federal detainees waiting for trial and/or sentencing in its local jails, including individuals violating immigration laws. El Paso County has guaranteed the federal government at least 500 beds, more than any other state or local jail in the United States (Hill 2018). In return, USMS had paid El Paso County $70 dollars per inmate per day between 2000 and 2016, thereafter a new contract established a new rate of $80 (The County of El Paso, Texas 2016). The contract constitutes the third biggest source of revenue for the county. On June 4, 2017, County Commissioner

Vincent Perez held a news conference calling to end El Paso's contract with USMS due to the financial losses incurred from housing federal detainees at a cost of $89 per detainee per day, leading to a loss of $17 million for the County between 2012 and 2017.

The following week, at a County Open Meeting, Perez presented the results of his research showing that 70 percent of all federal detainees had immigration charges. Furthermore, he argued that El Paso County takes a large burden in detaining federal inmates, who account for 25.66 percent of all federal detainees in Texas. The concern over maintaining the contract occurred against the backdrop of legal challenges to Texas Senate Bill 4 (SB4), which banned Sanctuary Cities in the state of Texas. El Paso is not a Sanctuary City. Canceling the contract with USMS would have led to reduced revenues and the closing of one of its two jails. As a strong advocate of continuing the contract, El Paso County Sheriff Richard Wiles argued that 250 employees would be terminated, jailers who otherwise "buy homes and pay property taxes." He also argued that transporting all arrestees to one facility would cause "disruption in public safety," loss in capacity and flexibility in county jails, and reduce revenues benefitting the county. Additionally, Wiles pointed out that federal detainees are their biggest source of "trustees," inmates who work in the kitchen and in other operations within the jail.

The rest of the Commissioners Court and the County Judge, Veronica Escobar, were not happy either with Perez's motions to terminate the contract. They felt blindsided by Perez's press conference on an issue set to be discussed in strategic budget meetings. Perez felt that Escobar's decision not to run for re-election for County Judge--and an imminent successful run for Texas's 16th Congressional seat--would mean that the issue

would not be resolved. Escobar excoriated Perez for putting public pressure on the Court and moralizing the issue by tying it to debates on SB4. To this point, Sheriff Wiles said, "I just don't want to be the one to enforce [SB4]…we have a federal agency whose job it is to enforce that…I have my job and they have theirs. So, I don't see a conflict between opposing SB4 and allowing the federal government to lease beds from us for inmates that they feel need to be prosecuted under federal law." Veronica Escobar also did not agree with the idea that opposition to SB4 had any financial motivations.

Given the independent nature of Perez's research and that the County's budget office did not have enough information to corroborate the figures presented, the total cost incurred and revenue generated from the contract was left unresolved. However, the moral question, brought up by many residents at the meeting, weighed heavily on the room. Again, Escobar argued against moralizing the revenue stream coming in to the County from the federal government.

> My concern with the way this has been approached is "there are good guys and there are bad guys"…and that takes me to the moral issue. When I moved back to El Paso in my early twenties after graduate school, the very first thing I did was get involved in immigrant advocacy work. I went into the *colonias*[4] and I taught people their rights when confronted by Border Patrol. We created know your rights cards that we distributed to marginalized communities. I served on boards. I raised money for nonprofits that did immigrant advocacy work…Our decision to eliminate a federal contract will not change federal immigration law…I have been very transparent about my views on immigration…and I have lived my values, I have spent my money, donated my money; donated my time; donated my energy…This vote or nonvote, or my desire for more information, will not eradicate that. No one can change that.

[4] Colonias are informal settlements in border regions characterized by uncertain land tenure, lack of financing, self-construction of homes, and a lack of adherence to planning regulations (Heyman and Campbell, 2004).

Judge Escobar included her own story to the debate to show the unfairness of a moralized characterization of the vote to end the contract with USMS. Escobar also assured Sheriff Wiles that no one could take away his advocacy for immigrants either. Sheriff Wiles, along with the County of El Paso and the Texas Organizing Project Education Fund, had filed a lawsuit against the State of Texas over House Bill 4, which bans sanctuary cities. Escobar is immersing her personal story in this debate in what Polletta (1998) would see as an attempt to make intelligible a very hazy and morally ambiguous situation. Escobar told the public she cares about immigrants and she has put in the work; that that should not be questioned. This is who she is. Escobar went on to explain what ultimately became her public position on the matter:

> I think it is very important for us to realize that this population, in the absence of changing federal immigration law, this population doesn't magically disappear. It gets shifted to outlying prisons, probably private prisons, where we cannot control the situation they are in, where they will be further away from their families and their legal representation…if we pose this as "if we vote against this contract, then we are pro-immigrant," I think it's fundamentally unfair and frankly, over-simplistic.

The population Escobar is referring to is composed of federal inmates, mostly migrants. Her concern is already a reality for immigrant advocacy organizations and local attorneys in El Paso. Two private detention centers that these organizations receive requests from are outside city limits in Chaparral, New Mexico and Sierra Blanca, Texas. Compromiso does not provide services to the latter due to a lack of resources. Hence, being away from crucial resources is a significant concern. On the other hand, the majority of migrants detained by immigration authorities are usually asylum seekers from Central America who do not have family in El Paso, seldom have resources to pay for an immigration

attorney, and will have a difficult time getting picked by an immigrant advocacy organization for pro-bono representation. As a result, the material consequences of not keeping migrants jailed in El Paso will be minimal for Central American asylum seekers. The resources Escobar is debating about mostly concern Mexicans whose families live in El Paso.

Nobody seconded Commissioner Lopez's motion for a vote on the contract, so his attempt failed. It did start a conversation in El Paso about the contract, though. The County Judge reached out to immigrant advocacy organizations for input on the matter, all of which agreed with Escobar despite their opposition to detaining or incarcerating migrants for immigration related matters (personal communication). They agreed with Escobar's observation that detainees were going to be more isolated if detained outside El Paso. On July 31 of the same year, County Judge Escobar explained her final position on the matter in moral terms: "I cannot say that I support legal defense for those who can't get it anywhere else and then turn around and say I'm going to make it as hard for them as possible to get access. The moral side of this discussion has made up my mind for me." The moral aspect of the discussion, in this case concerning access to legal representation, is what drove Escobar's decision, but the moral question regarding indirect facilitation of immigration enforcement is not mentioned. A year later, Commissioner Perez stated the moral issue like this after the Trump Administration revealed its zero-tolerance policy: "I think the County's position is very problematic. I think its indefensible…You cannot have it both ways. You cannot be against the enforcement of federal immigration laws and say that we will detain them in our jails.

You cannot be against separation of children and yet be OK with detaining their parents" (DeLeon 2018). Both sides of the debate struggle with *how* care is going to be provided: by making it easier to provide legal assistance or by refusing to collaborate with the federal government.

Escobar's framing and her decision to support the contract with USMS reveals that caring for migrants requires their proximity to resources, even if it means indirectly helping the federal government enforce immigration laws. By maintaining control over migrants, one can provide the best possible situation for them. The dual nature of caring, then, pulls individuals and organizations in the United States into moral decisions: if immigrants are going to be detained and exposed to suffering, it is best for it to happen close to caregivers than far away--even if by providing care, one is collaborating with the federal government.

Thus, Judge Escobar, along with the rest of Court and immigrant advocacy organizations, are deploying a discourse of care to mobilize support for maintaining the contract with USMS. Specifically, Judge Escobar described her contributions and commitment to the immigrant community alongside other local organizations. This narrative relies on an abstract notion of a community. And in the face of enhanced enforcement, which is clearly a xenophobic push by the federal government, the County government and local organizations represent the problem as one of access to legal representation because immigration law has not changed. By caring for immigrants and the community, the Court is maintaining control of its resources which enable it to provide momentary relief—an indirect accompaniment.

PUNITIVE CARE AND INTERMITTENT ACCOMPANIMENT IN DETENTION CENTERS

Caring for immigrants is not just a concern at the County level of government. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) also express concern for the wellbeing of migrants detained at the El Paso Service Processing Center. This facility was opened in 1968. It is located next to the El Paso International Airport, spread over 27 acres of land shared with U.S. Border Patrol offices. The compound has many monikers, such as *corralon* and camp, where detainees wait to go to immigration court (located within the facility), and await transfers to other facilities or deportation. One would be forgiven for underestimating the sheer size of the facility; the Border Patrol office faces one of the busiest avenues in El Paso, while the rest of the complex in the back blends in with industrial buildings, warehouses, and ubiquitous rock walls so characteristic of the city. Upon entering you are greeted by two subcontracted armed security guards, many of whom have worked at the facility for years. For newcomers and even regular visitors, a sense of intimidation and nervousness upon entering the complex is common. Periodic squabbles with the guards often frustrate even the most seasoned of visitors.

As part of a summer internship at Compromiso, staff and volunteers toured the El Paso Processing Center, the only detention center within city limits. ICE is interested in the public opinion of the agency and the facility, so they provide tours led by its Community Relations Officer, Luke Miller. Luke had been a chaplain in the military before taking his position with ICE. He is a transplant to the city with a jovial disposition who began wearing cowboy garb a few months after starting his job. Before meeting him, we waited in the visitors' area. Three large accreditation certificates hang on the wall

facing the entrance, showing that the highest standards of safety and care are being met. The armed guards in the front desk took our IDs, gave us visitor passes, and instructed us to put all our belonging in lockers.

The first part of the tour involved meeting detainees in the cells where they wait to see visitors, or to go to court. The only other male intern and I first met a Mexican man fleeing a dangerous situation in which state agents seemed to be implicated. He told us that the conditions at the detention center were fine and that he had everything to feel secure. The other detainee we met was from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He was quieter, and more interested in seeing if we could help him with his asylum case. He brought all his legal documents to the meeting in a large U.S. postal service envelope, which is the default folder for all documents in the detention center.

Luke explained to us that detainees have access to organizations like Compromiso, and as a result, "a chance to get a US visa, asylum…a life here." His merry demeanor and friendly tone throughout the tour seemed to belie the fact that we were touring a prison; it felt more like a rehabilitation center or something better. Luke gave the impression that he cared about migrants, and that the detention facility made it possible to provide that care to migrants. Luke told us that they do their best despite the circumstances, given many migrants leave the detention center prior to establishing meaningful relationships with staff. He pointed out that some detainees did not even know they were diabetic before being examined by the medical staff at the detention center. Their sleeping quarters were great, he added, ready for people to move in: "better than your college dorms!"

Throughout the tour, we were not allowed to take pictures because if published on social media, we were told, they could endanger the lives of detainees—and even their families--who might be fleeing persecution. At one point, while walking to a hexagonal, panoptical building with large rooms for women, a detainee being escorted in handcuffs yelled out to us that the food at the detention center was bad; that they were mostly fed snacks and a burrito at times; that they were going to be fed something nice today because we were visiting. I brought this incident up in the final Q&A session of the tour, and Luke laughed at the situation, saying that the man was just a bad apple at the detention center. He told us that in those types of situations, they tend to isolate them to ensure our safety, "…you are always going to have these trouble-makers," even though the group touring the detention center never felt scared or intimidated by detainees. "So, they are not hungry here?" I asked. "People gain weight when they are here," he answered, "they get about 3500 calories a day in addition to the sodas and snacks they can buy from vending machines…They get shrimp, the best chicken wings, ribs…if you are trying to create sumo wrestlers, this is the place!" When I told Rebecca, Compromiso's director, about this incident and what Luke had replied, she said it was true, that a lot of times detainees gain weight in the detention center.

ICE's Community Relations Officer also provided a tour of the Otero detention center (operated by Management and Training Corporation, or MTC) to college students visiting Casa Asunción. The tour took place three months after a DHS's Office of Inspector General report revealed concerns about the treatment and care of detainees at Otero. The report indicated that some detainee telephones did not work, and that Otero,

along with other detention centers in the country, were "violating the PBNDS [Performance-Based National Detention Standards] in the administration, justification, and documentation of segregation and lock-down of detainees." It added that detainees were not adequately informed about procedures, or disciplinary actions enforced at the center.

> Staff did not always tell detainees why they were being segregated, nor did they always communicate detainees' rights in writing or provide appeal forms for those put in punitive lock-down or placed in segregation. In multiple instances, detainees were disciplined, including being segregated or locked down in their cells, without adequate documentation in the detainee's file to justify the disciplinary action.

Finally, the report indicated that bathrooms at the center did not meet their "cleanliness and sanitation" standards. Thus, the tour was an opportunity to improve the public perception of the detention center. Casa Asunción volunteers returned dismayed and talked about the experience. Among the most discussed aspects was the surgical cleanliness of the facilities. Patricio, one of the volunteers who participated in the tour, said he did not see a single crumb in the food storage section of the kitchen. All volunteers sneered at a particular anecdote shared by the warden. Patricio recounted the warden's narrative of how an employee approached the warden in an odd manner:

"'Warden, warden, I have to share something with you,'" Patricio mimicked as he continued with the story "…and then they bring a bottle of syrup. And the bottle of syrup that had been found … was spotless; there were no drips. And when he went home and

checked the bottle of syrup in his house, there were drips on the side. That's how clean the prison is, excuse me, the detention facility, that even the syrup bottle is clean."

James, Another volunteer added, "I think the whole tour was some variation of that."

Patricio: "It was pure PR. They really wanted us to sell this to the American people and tell everyone how great it is."

The warden appeared amazed at how clean the syrup bottle at the detention center was, considering how sticky syrup bottles tend to be. The cleanliness in the narrative presented, real and imagined, show how the state gestures towards its concern for detained migrants. Codes and regulations appear to be followed to an excessive degree, as a counterpoint to what the Office of the Inspector General might say.

Sylvia, a Jewish volunteer at Casa Asunción, explained her experience with this narrative of cleanliness. She had been to Terezin, a concentration camp and ghetto in the German-occupied Czech lands during WWII, also where some of her family members were held. She found similarities with the Otero detention center, mainly, the use of space: the way unexposed toilets were lined up next to each other, and how as many bunk beds as possible were put in one room. She continued,

> And they kept going on about [how] everything is so spotless. It was really bizarre, because…they talked about, they described it as, 'this place is fine, this place is great,' like, it looks okay, people could go and I guess make themselves feel better, they have sinks, they have activities...I didn't really admit it to myself and my dad who is…I mean, he like loved Raegan, like, thinks some immigrants

> are great and thinks others are not was, 'that sounds like Terazin what you are describing to me right now.' I didn't want to admit it, but shit, when my dad says that…like, it's true! And I think that just really freaked me out.

After the tour, the warden and the Community Relations Officer asked Sylvia if it would be okay if they filmed the next group of students touring the detention center. They wanted to show this video to others to signal that things were fine at the detention center. Sylvia felt disturbed by how comfortable the immigration officials were when making the request. The significant role that Terazin played in German propaganda brought home even more similarities with Otero and what ICE was asking Sylvia to do.

The bizarre paradox of caring by incarcerating illustrates the manner in which the asylum process works in the United States. This contrast is what most impacted volunteers at Casa Asunción, who could not help but feel the surreal eeriness of the situation; of how easy it seemed for Luke and the warden to "lie" and ignore the reality of the detention center.

Mexican journalist Gustavo de la Rosa expressed this suspicious sentiment in a letter to his friends and the public. Upon admitting that he feared for his life in Juarez, CBP officers detained him as he attempted to cross the border. He recounts his experience from detention like this,

And here I am. Together with other refugees, many of them, and from all parts of Mexico and Central America. They gave me clean and comfortable clothes and they provide all of us with a bed, a bathroom, food and medical and religious services. Nevertheless, the work routines of this refugee center seem quite strange to me. The volunteers wear

uniforms, they walk with a military step. They give and they take orders. Everything is done on schedule and according to strict rules. But, what gets my attention more than anything is this obsession they have with putting me in handcuffs to take me to the doctor.

Could it be true that I am in prison?

The various accounts of care alongside those of abuse in detention centers are confusing to volunteers, paralegals, attorneys, and activists. Protection and care are the rhetoric deployed to contain migrants. Physical "protection" can be so absolute as to stripping migrants bare "for their own sake".

Keeping migrants and asylum seekers in a detention center is a clear punitive effort to deter migration to the United States, since at least 1980 (Helton 1984). Luke and many other officials claim that migrants are cared for in detention centers. There are elements of truth to this claim, such as the medical care that detainees receive, especially for physical injuries. Yet, the care remains highly inadequate, particularly for those suffering from more complicated physical and mental illnesses. Caring about migrants and asylum seekers in this space, then, can only be described as punitive care, a contradictory term that illustrates how detention centers punish migrants and asylum seekers, most of them without non-immigration offenses, while providing basic services that are of bad quality.

CONCLUSION

This chapter shows how different spaces generate different politics of caring about migrant and asylum seekers. At Casa Asunción, caring about involves providing a place for temporary respite to migrants and asylum seekers from the difficulties experienced in the journey to the United States, and the punitive measures taken against them at the border. This form of assistance has a long theological history in the form of accompaniment, a pastoral practice intended to provide an understanding presence, without attempting to solve the problems of or establish an agenda for the afflicted. Caring about migrants also entails making choice about what to care about, from a range of possible options. Casa Asunción makes it a point to remain resource-scarce so as to reduce obligations to third parties (such as funders and the government). This provides the organization with flexibility regarding how to help migrants; it allows the shelter to make the claim that they are "closer to the poor in migration", i.e. that they are building solidarity with migrants.

The County of El Paso also makes its own form of accompaniment possible by renewing its contract with the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS). This form of accompaniment is not the one described by theologians or practiced in Casa Asunción. Rather, it is a suspended accompaniment happening in a carceral space. Caring about migrants and asylum seekers here is manifested in a dilemma about whether to keep migrants jailed locally (and profit from it) or to have them detained elsewhere in a geographically isolated place. Ultimately, the former option was the course of action taken by the County. Even though Judge Escobar considered this choice a moral one, the

practical (albeit minimal) benefits of detaining migrants at the local jails make this a material choice. Caring for migrants' access to counsel and the ability for families to visit them illustrates liminal accompaniment, a form of accompaniment that is marked by the legally uncertain and contested status of migrants. This form of accompaniment is framed as a choice to secure or enable access to migrants, even though this choice is necessitated by isolating migrants from society and their families.

Finally, this chapter describes the politics of caring about migrants and asylum seekers in detention centers. The carceral nature of the space of detention centers does not automatically invalidate the possibility of care. Detainees are fed and receive medical attention. The quality of these services, though, is questionable even alarming in some cases. Nonetheless, Luke, the community liaison official, guides tours of the detention center with the intention of improving the public's perception of ICE. In this space, caring about manifests in the surgical cleanliness of the centers and the supposed high calorific intake of detainees. Luke's personality also works to paint a picture that conditions "are not that bad" after all. The contrast between the tour and the conditions painted by various reports creates a sense of confusion.

The politics of caring about emerging in these three spaces, then, deal with holding or housing migrants somewhere. In all cases, this somewhere is as close as possible to designated caregivers. The politics emerging from these spaces are of accompaniment, liminal accompaniment, and punishment. The intention behind the care creates different imperatives for care. In the first instance, the interest in accompanying poor migrants (i.e. caring about) means that resource scarcity mediates "caring about" in

the space of the shelter. Caring about migrants' and asylum seekers' access to legal counsel means recognizing the legal uncertainty that shrouds their status, and using that to jail them locally. Finally, deterrence practices make migration and seeking asylum in the United States as difficult as possible within and outside the law. Thus, punishment mediates the caring about in the space of the detention center.

Accompaniment, as established in the beginning of the chapter, is meant to transgress the status quo and build solidarity with migrants. It is meant to bring caregivers and care receivers closer to one another, both physically and emotionally. This is the point of identifying with migrants. Liminal accompaniment, on the other hand, means collaborating with those inflicting harm in order to reduce the harm being done. These politics facilitate accompaniment, but under the terms set by the state. Finally, the politics of punitive care are intended to punish and deter migration of any form while using public relations to obfuscate this goal.

Next, I turn to organizations and individuals' efforts to procure the inputs of care. In other words, to take care of the things that one needs to provide care. This means reducing the quantity of work to be able to focus on the quality of it. I explain why and how caregivers do this in the following chapter.

Chapter 4. Taking Care of Things: Carving Out Spaces of Care in Stressful Organizational Environments

In this chapter I delve into the organizational life of Compromiso and Casa Asuncion to illustrate a central dilemma I encountered at the border. When resources are scarce and the need for helps increase, helping everyone equally is harder and harder. How do you balance the quantity of help you can provide with quality under these conditions? What caregivers do to address this dilemma ultimately shapes spaces of care to be sustainable. I begin with a section from my fieldnotes to introduce how caregivers in El Paso experience this dilemma.

After the Department of Justice rescinded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)[5], the coalition of non-profits working on immigration, El Paso Coalition, called a press conference at Compromiso to inform the community about the change in policy, what it meant, and how to seek help. After the conference, Rebecca walks straight to Clarissa, who is standing at the back of the conference room, to ask about a stay of removal[6] for a client. Rebecca then turns to look at me and asks if I could help her. I say yes. The stay of deportation needed to be filed that same day, so we rush to finish the application as soon as possible. Clarissa and I start looking through the client's file to identify which documents are useful in making the case that the client needed to stay in the United States. Clarissa speaks throughout, giving me background information on the

[5] DACA is a form of temporary administrative relief from deportation.
[6] According to the U.S. Department of Justice, "A 'stay' decision issued by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) temporarily prevents the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) from executing an order of removal, deportation, or exclusion."

case while we shuffle through stacks of paper. The case involves a mother and daughter who initially wanted to adjust their immigration status in light of the latter's marriage to a U.S. citizen. Clarissa expresses her frustration with the client: "Ay, it's just that this client is so dumb. I think I had already told you about her. She got married but her mom likes to put ideas in her head. They saw a sketch of a criminal on TV and [the mother] convinced her that it was her husband." Clarissa explains to me that they were escaping a threatening situation in Mexico, so the mother may have been projecting her fear onto her daughter's recent marriage. But now mother and daughter were in danger of deportation because the young couple divorced, so the now ex-husband, who was a US citizen, could no longer sponsor their residency. The ex-husband had explained every detail of their situation to Clarissa, which made Clarissa feel like a therapist.

After Rebecca approved the contents of the application package planned by Clarissa and me, I go to my office to translate police reports and Clarissa works on putting the final packet together. We postpone our weekly case meeting by 30 minutes--a common occurrence for the legal team--because everyone is busy. Rebecca and Ana are busy interviewing candidates for Melissa's new assistant. At about 12:45PM Clarissa walks into my office to ask how I am doing on the translations. I am half-way done. "Haven't you done one of these translations before?" Clarissa asks "I have, but the legal codes cited were different," I reply with lowering spirits. At around 2:30PM Rebecca comes into my office to give me more work, but I tell her I am still not finished translating the inscrutable police reports citing pages of legal codes. "Oh, because the clients are here

and we need to turn this in as soon as possible. How far along are you?" I show her the last page that needs translation. "Have Clarissa help you with that." I give her the rest of the complicated text and I focus now on the actual description of the events reported. When I finish, I find Clarissa copying and pasting the report on Google translate. "I have no time to translate," she tells me, reading my perplexed face. I am a little shocked because I have been so careful with the legal language, but realizing how quickly the application packet has to be turned in, I calm down.

After buying lunch from a local grocery store a few blocks away, I receive a call from Rebecca informing me that another client's stay of deportation had been denied and that I am to pick up paper work from the court. When I get back to the office, I find Sister Caroline still waiting on Linda for our weekly case meeting. Annoyed with the repeated postponement of this case meeting (and many others), Sr. Caroline leaves at 3:30PM, asking me to inform Rebecca she had been waiting. At 5PM, I text Rebecca to see if she will be able to make it back to review cases. She says yes. She gets in at 7PM. When I walk into her office to finally go over intakes and cases, she asks me if I have been interviewing a lot of people at the detention center. I tell her I have. "Look", she begins, "the success of what you are doing is not based on how many people you see because I just won't be able to take on any cases." "I understand that," I say. "As you can see," she continues, "I can't take any more cases. I just can't," she looks away from me, towards her desk. "Look at all this that is happening" Rebecca explains as she waves a client's stay declination papers. I tell her I understand, even though I had made it my

mission to get through the list of people who called the office for an intake interview as fast and efficiently as possible. She continues to reflect: "Now the people who are [represented by us] are the ones feeling it…" The tenson Rebecca, as the staff attorney and director of the office, feels between helping more migrants and providing quality care for those who are already our clients, is palpable. The balance in this tension sways in different directions through my months at Compromiso. From my fieldnotes, November 16, 2017.

The chapters in this dissertation are organized along the multifaceted definition of care work provided by feminist scholars Fisher and Tronto (1990). This definition asks us to consider four aspects to caring: caring about others, which refers to emotions/ feelings; performing caring operations, which includes hiring persons who can provide such care; directly care for others through caregiving acts such as cooking and cleaning; and finally, how care receivers react to care. In this chapter I focus on the second aspect to caring, i.e., the way caregivers in El Paso take care of the operation of caring for migrants and asylum seekers.

According to Fisher and Tronto (1990), *taking care of* involves "the responsibility of initiating and maintaining caring activities" (p.42). Because of heightened anti-immigration policies and a widespread crackdown on migrants, there is much legal uncertainty at the border. Coupled with a lack of resources, this results in extraordinary workloads for care givers in Compromiso. There are more and more migrants to help, and more and more work for caregivers, which then results in the collapse of the quality of

care. Persons like Rebecca feel a dilemma—how to deny persons help in these extraordinary times, yet how to maintain quality so that they are effective in securing rights for migrants.

I argue that this moral dilemma—turning people down in order to be more effective caregivers, emotionally attaches caregivers collectively to their work. It also leads to collective frustration. In order to deal with this frustration, caregivers "carve out a space" within organizational operations that increases their sense of control over casework. Carving out space, I show, curiously pushes people to detach emotionally from work. Thus, my argument is that emotional distance is central not to disengagement in social movements, but to persisting in them. That is, emotional distance allows caregivers to give a structure to their world of work, making them more effective caregivers. To avoid burnout, caregivers fight for control through the reorganization of bureaucratic space. In this way, they aim to reduce casework while increasing the circulation of migrants through organizations.

The rest of the chapter is organized as follows: I will first illustrate the type of emotional and moral attachments at play among caregivers in El Paso at a time of increasing casework, harsher and uncertain immigration enforcement, and organizational resource scarcity. Caregivers at Compromiso often turned down requests from migrants and asylum seekers in order to focus on cases they had already agreed to work on. However, they were not always able to resist the urge to take on more cases. As a result, caregivers "stretch" themselves, working harder and for longer hours, in order to fulfill their obligations to migrants and asylum seekers. Caregivers often burned out or felt that

their work could become counterproductive or ineffective, as Rebecca tells me in the fieldnote above. Yet, rather than giving up, care workers in Compromiso *deepen* their commitment to caring for immigrants. Contrary to much of the literature on burn-out, I show how care workers cope with the threat of burnout, or even burnout itself. To deal with this situation, caregivers employ two strategies to obtain relief from frustration, and maintain commitment. First, caregivers carve out a space in the processes of the organization. Caregivers streamline processes, including case selection, which increases the time they can spend on current cases, enables them to strategize how to work on future cases, and prevents overload. Second, caregivers emotionally detach from work by creating boundaries between their work and other aspects of their lives. Both of these strategies illustrate the agency caregivers exert over their workflow, in order to continue caring. In this chapter I will focus on the first strategy, carving out a space, and I will return to the second in Chapter Five.

EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS TO CARE WORK AND MIGRANTS

Caregiving at Compromiso involves various legal and bureaucratic processes. Migrant individuals and families requesting immigration relief from the United States Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS) usually seek work permits, legal permanent residency, naturalization, and visas. These do not require going before an immigration judge. Rather, caregivers at Compromiso are the intermediaries who facilitate this process. Once a case has been approved, caseworkers make an appointment with clients to go over their case. The caseworker fills out the application with the client, who may be

asked to provide further evidence or information, and may be asked to return to sign documents. The caseworker then mails all application materials to USCIS.

Application results from USCIS arrive through the mail, so their delivery can potentially be a joyful experience. This is one way in which caregivers get validation and respite from the frustrations of their work. It is the most consistent form of victory at Compromiso and generates good office morale. For caseworkers, this means that a client was successfully served, their case can be closed, and they can inform the client that their application has been accepted. However, results from USCIS are not always positive. At times, USCIS returns a Request for Further Evidence (RFE) and other notices for a given application, elongating the application process and potentially leading to some roadblocks that may end up with a denial of immigration relief[7]. The following field note illustrates such a scenario. In the aftermath of DACA's rescission in September 2017, Compromiso helped more than 50 individuals reapply for DACA. Some of the applicants' cases were meeting obstacles.

There was a tall stack of envelopes, the majority of them from USCIS. Clarissa was going through the pile to look for her cases, expressing excitement when she came across a case she had worked on. "Oh, no" she muttered after she came across a particular envelope. "I thought it was going to be an RFE," but in this case, the paper in the envelope was not yellow (Request for Evidence). She kept nodding her face. "This

[7] Caseworkers sometimes use their knowledge of the RFE system to submit "skeleton" applications in order to buy time when time is scarce.

person, he has an aggravated assault!" "What kind of case is it," I asked. "It's a DACA renewal. I was wondering why it was taking so long", she said opening another one, "Oh, damn…. this one has two theft charges…. And he had just called me today because he had not received anything." She opened another one. This one was a DWI. All DACAs. I asked her what she was going to do. She had showed me in one of the letters that they wanted more information, and that they had done a background check indicating that the client had been arrested. But on the form, asking whether there were prior arrests, the client had answered "NO." Clarissa just kept going through the envelopes, looking for good news. She found some good news. There were two or three envelopes with green papers inside, which meant approval of a permit or visa.

Clarissa was not opening only her clients' envelopes. "I will open this one as well…its not my client, but I helped put together the packet haha" she looked at it, said "oh," and then just put it back in the envelope: "I'm just going to let Melissa look at it." Then Melissa came by the copy room and Clarissa showed her the stack of envelopes while grinning nervously, "I know dude…" Melissa asked with a nervous smile on her face. "Did you look at them?" Clarissa: "No, but I knew something was coming…it was taking too long." "Ok, let me show you," Clarissa responded. Then Clarissa showed her the paperwork for the person with theft charges. "OK, this one is not that bad because for DACA it is not a big deal…" replied Melissa. Then Clarissa showed Melissa the envelope for the client who had a DWI or the assault charge. "Yeah, this is serious…" she said. "Well, this might still not be that bad…when did we submit this? Because if it

happened before the charge, then we wouldn't know about this charge…the other thing is that the question on the application asks if you have been convicted, not charged. So maybe there is a way around this…" Melissa then went off explaining the strategy to follow, who to contact, and what to do.

"Don't stress out, Clarissa! I see you touching your forehead!" Melissa exclaimed.

"It's just that…" Melissa sighed, then continued, "It's funny, my mom's eye starts twitching when she gets stressed out. When I see that I start telling her to breathe to relax! And I taught my little niece to also relax when she would get excited or hyped up, Î taught her to say it out loud: 'caaaalm doooown, caaaaalm downnnn' and now she drives everyone nuts because when she sees people stressing out, she starts saying, 'caaaaalm doooown'…

Clarissa and Melissa had submitted various DACA renewal applications as representatives of clients. USCIS was sending back RFEs for cases showing inconsistencies between applications and criminal backgrounds. One of the requirements to acquire DACA is to not have felonies, or significant misdemeanor convictions, or three or more misdemeanors of other kinds (USCIS 2018). USCIS was doubtful that some of the applicants Compromiso was representing were not meeting this criterion. As evidenced in Melissa and Clarissa's interaction, caregivers in this situation faced frustration. Clients sometimes did not share all relevant facts with caregivers while helping them fill out applications. When this happens, clients have to meet with caregivers, provide more information, and meet with their caseworker to do more work,

which elongates the time and effort spent on their cases. This elongation means that more energy and resources will be put into these 'difficult' cases. It also means that caregivers' emotional engagement with these cases, and with these clients, will be longer. Given the frustration involved, because they can't help others, and given irritation they might feel about being given incomplete information, Melissa and Clarrisa's caring turns to annoyance toward clients. Some of this is tempered by how the client reacts, and what circumstances led to the errors in the applications.

Ideally, Compromiso's clients are collaborators in the success of their own cases. Caregivers' ability to help migrants and asylum seekers is shaped by the latter's ability and willingness to cooperate. The level of involvement required from care receivers varies on the type of case. Care-receivers will need to compile documents from an employer or family members to adjust their status. Applying for asylum requires police reports and evidence that asylum seekers' lives are threatened in their home countries. As a result, caregivers must explain application processes to care receivers and coordinate the exchange of documents, write affidavits, and sign applications. Another critical element to collaboration is honesty. Migrants and asylum seekers have to be open about their immigration and criminal histories, as well as about their family histories in the US and home countries. This prevents attorneys and staff from feeling blindsided by evidence presented against clients by the government, i.e., prosecutors. In the same vein, attorneys and paralegals have to be honest about migrants' and asylum seekers' chances of winning their cases.

The collaboration between caregivers and receivers generates particular emotional dynamics, especially around gratitude. I will discuss the aesthetic field created in this type of relationship in the next chapter, but here is one example. During a conversation about difficult clients, Rebecca contrasted the frustration she feels with some clients, with feeling undeserving of the gratitude expressed by other clients. Rebecca told me, "Today I had this one lady who saw me on television…and she was so happy and she couldn't believe that I would go with her to her [USCIS] appointment. 'Really?!' she said, 'Yes, I will be there. That is part of what you pay for'… and she just couldn't believe it. It brought tears to her eyes. And I just don't think I deserve that level of gratitude…and then you have clients like Louis or Alonso who lie to me…" Rebecca perceived this client's gratitude as more sincere. And not because the client cried: Alonso had also cried when thanking Compromiso for their efforts on his asylum case at one staff meeting. It was the honesty of their exchange that prompted Rebecca's appreciation for her client, and her feelings of undeserving-ness. Honesty here is not valuable only as a personal characteristic, it also makes caregiving easier, reducing frustration. This shows that caregivers' emotional response to their work is mediated by the material realities of service provision, particularly the kind of cases being worked on, and the personal relationships built with clients.

The failures or setbacks experienced by caregivers under resource scarcity and policy uncertainty have a negative impact on the morale of Casa Asunción, Compromiso, and other organizations in similar situations. Many studies have shown that continuous positive social exchanges lead to positive emotions, which then encourages further

exchanges (Tse and Dasborough 2008; Lawler, Thye, and Yoon 2000; Lawler and Thye, 1999). In the case of caregivers in El Paso, continuous social exchanges with migrants and state officials (sometimes) leads to negative outcomes. While I was conducting research, there was a constant feeling that fires needed to be put out. But instead of disengaging, caregivers continued working. Lawler (2001) posits that the collective nature of tasks like the ones at Compromiso and Casa Asunción can lead to positive and negative feelings towards the self and others, producing alienation (affective detachments), and ultimately disengagement. However, the attribution of positive emotions to the group due to operational interdependency can reduce the negative feelings towards the self and others despite negative outcomes in group efforts (Lawler 2001). In other words, frustration and burnout do not lead to disengagement from caregiving if organizational spaces nurture positive affective attachments among group members.

One of the ways that positive affective attachments are attributed to group efforts is through moral emotions. Self-conscious moral emotions, such as shame, embarrassment, and guilt, have the function of self-disciplining behavior to maintain group cohesion (Haidt 2003). In the following section I show caregivers' sense of responsibility towards work with marginalized people in Compromiso and Casa Asunción. Although they vary in intensity, these emotions and their accompanying behaviors benefit social change efforts, while also establishing a sense of emotional group*ness*.

MORAL EMOTIONS: DOING WHAT IS RIGHT

Caregivers approach their caregiving with a moral lens, and the type of moral lens varies depending on caregivers' backgrounds. Sister Caroline is in her 70s. A Catholic nun from the Midwest, she has spent many years among indigent communities in Latin America. During one of our lunches at Compromiso, she talked to me about her time in South America. She had lived in Northern Peru and Bogotá, Colombia, and I asked her if she enjoyed those experiences. She answered by contrasting both places. About Bogotá, Sr. Caroline said, "If you close your eyes…you could be anywhere," meaning any other cosmopolitan city. She said it was beautiful, commenting on the beauty of the mountains and flowers she saw, "…but I prefer Perú". I asked her why. She said it was because of the people--they were very humble: "there are parts where there are no roads. You have to travel on a donkey!" She also told me that Gustavo Gutierrez (theologian founder of Liberation theology) was from that area and that Abimael Guzman (founder and leader of Sendero Luminoso) taught in that region. The contrast between cosmopolitan Bogotá and rural Perú, and Sr. Caroline's preference for the latter, shows a common theme among clergy people and the Catholic discourses shaping caregiving: rural communities are seen as far more needy, and they seek a closer connection with the poor. Sr. Constantine, a staff member at Compromiso whom I ended up replacing, also expressed a desire to understand migrants and their condition through the theological notion of the "preferential option for the poor." This moral precept indicates that preference should be given to the poor and powerless in any society. This idea would eventually become a founding principle of Liberation Theology emerging in Latin America in the 1970s.

Being exposed to poverty and other social problems, though, is not easy. Knowing that little can be done to help marginalized people must be understood in a certain way to gain meaning from it. One day while organizing my day at Compromiso, Sister Caroline came into the office I shared with her and told me, "with your presence, you are doing God's work. You know the holy father[8] went to Myanmar and he didn't even mention the Rohingya. But he was there…" This act of accompaniment that Sister Caroline is attributing to me, to her, and to other staff members at Compromiso, helps provide a sense of meaning to the work even if the outcomes are not clear. In this view, going to see migrants and asylum seekers and talking to them could be enough. The act of visiting oppressed groups or incarcerated individuals constitutes one of the most popular solidarity practices in El Paso and in the Americas. By connecting in this way, one sends a message to the outside world. It can link socially distant individuals with a similar political outlook, and generate emotional and material support for cases.

On another occasion I had told Sister Caroline that I felt badly when I visited potential clients because I would request to speak with the maximum number of detainees possible per visit, which was five. The detainees are usually all brought together to the visiting areas and wait in a cell until they are called. I told her I felt badly for those I got to see last because it could take hours before I talked to them. Sometimes, I could even see them in the back, behind tinted windows, pacing back and forth while waiting. She told me that I should not worry. That most of the time they spent their days locked up

[8] Pope Francis

somewhere else. That if they get a visitor, at least they get out, they get to walk a bit, and that if it is a nice day, they get to enjoy some of that as well.

Although accompaniment and "preference for the poor" are logics at work in Compromiso, the constant stress of bureaucratic work and deadlines can make accompaniment a minimal aspect of the work if one is not intentionally reflexive about it. But on the limited occasions that Sister Caroline talked to me about this aspect of the work, it brought me some comfort. This comfort is momentary and perhaps even defeatist, but in the grand scheme of the work and the mission of Compromiso, it can be a helpful strategy in calming frustrations associated with not being able to do as much as one wants. It also reinforces a moral and political desire to be intentionally close to suffering.

Caregivers not associated with religious organizations had other ways to explain their interest in helping migrants. Some caregivers have a radical vision of their work and their relationship to migrants. Sandra, a twentysomething white college graduate from the Northeast, graduated from a liberal arts college in the Midwest and worked for two years on the West Coast before committing to volunteer for a year at Casa Asunción. Sandra's previous work at a private school for gifted children was fun and she could "nebulously" see herself as a teacher. Yet, Trump's election made her feel a crisis was happening. Working at the private school made her reflect on her privilege, especially the access to resources that had helped her, her brother, and now the children she worked with become successful students. Going to college would lead to a stable job for herself, she surmised, but this did not mean one would have a positive impact on others. She explained, "so, be

part of a wave of gentrification…not all your fault personally, but you're part of a movement that's negatively impacting your community..." She asked herself why *she* was working at that school given all the important resources these children had at their disposal. This contrasted with her values: "All of these kids just have so many important resources, which was good but I really like putting a lot of work into something I'm passionate about slash having a positive effect on the world." Trump's election shifted her attention towards communities where she could have a positive impact. "I felt things were already bad. But I definitely felt more of a wakeup call, 'What am I really doing?'"

Sandra felt motivated to go to Casa Asunción by talking to friends and a former volunteer. The organization's website was discouraging because of its emphasis on Catholic values and traditions. Sandra is half-Jewish and talking to other volunteers, some of them Jewish, helped allay her fears. Becoming part of a hierarchical organization was not as easy either. But Sandra felt motivated by the radical nature of the organization: hosting undocumented migrants and living in community with them. This itself constitutes a federal crime if interpreted as "aiding and abetting" undocumented migrants: "…I thought it was going to be like a hippie organization in some ways…I thought it would make me feel a little bit more like that since it's pretty rad." In reality, though, Casa Asunción felt more regimented.

> I didn't expect to be that much of an enforcer since I thought that was the opposite of the point of living in community with people. At the same time, I think my first impressions of the house I was like, 'Oh, the building and the atmosphere feels like a co-op,' that I'd been in college but also, it's not just white 19-year-olds, it's like migrant families, which is interesting.

Sandra indicates that she does not want to be an enforcer of the house rules because it contrasts with her view of a more horizontal form of conviviality that reduces power hierarchies. Indeed, the types of relationships possible between volunteers and guests are shaped by the power difference between them, and volunteers' obligation to monitor guests' behavior.

According to Sandra, some religious individuals are perplexed by the radical students' commitment. Digging deeper, some of Sandra's model for volunteering comes from her mother, who is a special education teacher. Sandra's mom wants her students to "be happy…and have a good life." Sandra elaborates on her mother's motivation by indicating that it is not an "intellectual thing" but rather, because her mother does not want to see her students suffering; she wants them to thrive, and she wants to "be part of making that happen." Sandra's motivation is also triggered by the immediateness of suffering:

> I guess I do it for political reasons, things that are rooted in social justice and it's about injustice…and feelings. No, it's *all* about feelings and when I'm having so many feelings, I don't really think about the big picture…I'm thinking how you're crying in front of me right now. I don't put it into a bigger context.

Sandra makes a sharp emphasis on how emotions are a central motivator for her. Yet, she recognizes the importance of spirituality because it brings peace with this type of work. "…I feel like Sr. M [says] 'it's with God, God knows what's up. Oh, God'll figure it out.' I'm just like 'people are being separated from their children!' and like freaking out and she's like, 'God's got it.' I wish I felt confident that someone was watching…I'm never at peace with anything." Nonetheless, Sandra does draw some relief from the

relationships she creates with guests and other volunteers, “I don’t know if this is spiritual, but I think the thing that really gets me again is relationships with people, mostly with guests but also with my coworkers, feeling like—I feel what I can get out of it is community and mutualism or whatever. That feels important more than God.” Community was a feeling that Sandra had unsuccessfully looked for in her previous jobs. She did experience it, though, in the various trips she made to El Salvador during college, where groups of students would listen to stories from the Civil War and work in community organizations. Her work in El Salvador “felt like a lot of it was based on community and not just friendship, that’s too simple, but mutual accountability and knowing people and supporting people. I still talk to people from the community and students—I made friends with students that way. I guess that is what makes work feel important to me.”

Inadequacy

During my final week at Compromiso, I was tying up loose ends in the casework at the local detention centers so that Sr. Caroline could take over my responsibilities. This involved meeting with Rebecca to go over open cases. The first question I had, though, was about whether I should catch up on the requests for intakes from detainees at the local detention center. We had accumulated about 15 requests for visits during the Christmas break. “No, we are not doing any new intakes.” I was a bit surprised because this was a new year, and we could easily go to the detention center and reject cases. This would at least provide some solace to detainees. I ended up writing letters to those

detainees informing them of the resource limitations at the time. Rebecca also asked me how many cases were pending with Mike, our contact with FronteraX. FronteraX is a program within a West Coast nonprofit that provides support to organizations on the U.S.-Mexico through collaboration on detention cases. FronteraX built a collaborative online platform that allows various individuals to get acquainted with, and determine next steps of, particular cases. In this manner, Frontera X volunteers or Compromiso staff can log in and work on cases collaboratively. The goal is to scale the capacity of small border organizations struggling with large caseloads. Compromiso was the only organization in El Paso that accepted FronteraX's offer. It was also the one that needed the most help. Compromiso struggled financially and was unable to hire more attorneys and paralegals.

"We have three cases pending with FronteraX," I told her. "We had four cases, but Mike won't be able to help us because the fourth individual had his merits hearing today." Rebecca then asked me about this fourth individual, Ramiro, who had a merits hearing that day. "Does Ramiro know we will not be representing him?" she asked. By this time, I thought I had made that clear to Ramiro, but I realized I had failed. Earlier that day, he called the office to ask what would happen to him given that we were not at his hearing that day; he told Elena, the receptionist, that he was expecting us there. He asked whether he should look for another attorney. "I hope he does not think we are representing him! Did we sign a retainer? I just want to make sure that we wrap everything up correctly," she added. I went to get his file and I showed her the retainer. "I don't think we specified what we were doing in the retainer" I told Rebecca. "Let me see it," she said. We had agreed to help with his parole application, but given that none of his

contacts wanted to sponsor him, it was impossible to proceed. Additionally, we were depending on FronteraX to help with the application but they never got around to it. "Well, at this point I don't know if anything can be done…why don't we close the case making it clear that we will not be representing him," she said. I felt confused, scared, and embarrassed. I had consulted Rebecca on his retainer, and she was aware of the case because Alonso, a detained client, had talked to Rebecca about Ramiro. This case could not have been a surprise for her. I felt I had given Ramiro false hopes, and that I had somehow tarnished Compromiso's reputation. I wondered, did it slip from our hands, or did we never have control over this matter?

Our meeting that evening continued this discussion. "You should just close all the pending cases that you have with Mike. Even if it turns out that Mike or we can help…then we can start a new process…" Rebecca explained,

The thing is that with Mike, we are both very passionate people, but I think it is turning into a situation where nothing is getting done…maybe it's a matter of going back to the drawing board. Because I had originally agreed to [collaborate with FronteraX] with the idea that they were going to prepare everything for us. We would turn in the intake, and they were going to get back to us with a packet ready to go, and that is not what has happened. You've had to go to the detention centers to get signatures and documents and that is too much.[9] *And I know that you are passionate about this and that you just can't*

[9] Also from same fieldnote, but placed here for clarity: *Made me think a little about how I had planned to rest these couple of weeks before starting fieldwork at Casa Asunción, but I forced myself to come back*

say no. I know, that in a position like yours, because I have been in that position, you just have to go along with it and say yes. And look, all of the energies and time that has been spent on Juan Pablo! And he doesn't have a good asylum case. He just doesn't. And I knew this from the beginning! But Mike has the ear of one of the best asylum attorneys in the country…maybe I am just not that good of an attorney.

This type of casework accumulation can lead to feelings of inadequacy because it takes longer to deliver on cases. Large caseloads slow down the speed at which cases get completed. The possibility of making errors also grows in this scenario. In an effort to reduce the chances for errors, Rebecca asked me to close all cases referred to FronteraX. She added that Mike wants to help because he is potentially as or more passionate than us; he will take as many cases as possible. Mike's passion, Rebecca implied, could potentially shield him from feeling overwhelmed because he did not show any signs of being cautious when accepting cases. When the collaboration started Compromiso could shift some casework and the concomitant stress to Mike. After a few weeks, it seemed like Rebecca and the organization had to reassess the situation. Rebecca ultimately asked me to follow up about specific cases so we do not lose track of their status.

Another case that generated a lot of frustration and stress was Juan Pablo's asylum request. The time and resources spent on Juan Pablo became an issue when we learned more information about his background than what we asked during the initial

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because I said yes. On the other hand, I love being there and catching up with people, watching them work, and eventually getting pulled in to work on a case…I know I can be helpful.

intake. Juan Pablo is an HIV-positive asylum seeker who was detained and did not receive the medicine he needed. After a few months of detention he began a hunger strike. Compromiso and allied organizations started a media campaign to support Juan Pablo, and put pressure on the government to parole him so he could stay with a friend in California. However, continued requests to get him out on a humanitarian basis were denied for unclear reasons. ICE later revealed that Juan Pablo had a larceny charge against him when he lived in the United States years ago. This was part of the reason ICE did not want to release him on humanitarian reasons. He had only told Rebecca about a forgery charge against him—a much less severe violation. "Other attorneys would have requested evidence of the charges…but I didn't and now my name is on [his parole request] and these are the consequences." Her name and our pictures were also on the front page of the local newspaper among other media outlets. I then asked her if she felt it had been a waste of our efforts. "No, I don't mind that. I still think it is wrong for ICE to detain someone that they can't take care of." Rebecca did not question her efforts to release Juan Pablo, but rather, her ability to do it the way other attorneys would have done it. That is, not trusting clients as much and being more detached. This tension has structural roots: it is generated by a lack of resources, the aggressive practice of not providing adequate medical attention, and a client who was not completely transparent about his background. These pressures are insidious and their consequences difficult to foresee in real time when caregivers are trying to be compassionate. The different moving parts can easily lead to a feeling of personal inadequacy and stress.

That same evening, Rebecca told me how she got her job at Compromiso on account of her experience working for an immigration judge. She feels that somewhere her own experience is limited, and this makes it hard for her to navigate a legal relationship with her clients along with a personal one. When she began working at Compromiso, Rebecca took on the high-profile case of Alonso, which turned out to be very complicated. Despite having the opportunity to close his case administratively, Rebecca accommodated the client's desire to fight his case until the very end. Rebecca thought the client wanted to prove something to the judge. She went along with Alonso's wishes, even though it kept complicating his case. Finally, he missed a check-in with immigration officials that ultimately led to his and his son's detention. The case is now in the hands of a third attorney. This attorney said to Rebecca that she had been too nice with the client.

"I always hear that attorneys get in fights with their clients and I just don't that much." She suspected that on the various occasions when Alonso brought food to the office, he crossed a line that made his relationship with Compromiso's staff more personal. Alonso had also told Rebecca's assistant at the time that he had fallen in love with her. Rebecca wished she had been sterner in establishing a professional relationship. Rebecca's lack of boundary-drawing, she suspected, allowed for certain infractions in the client-attorney relationship to happen. For example, Alonso's son, who is in his father's case, had an encounter with the police, which could hurt their case, but Alonso did not explain the severity of the situation when it happened. In other words, Rebecca wanted more transparent, client-attorney communication.

This insecurity is also reflected in the need to improve case screenings. That is, conducting better intakes that can lead to better decisions with regards to what cases to take and which ones to not take. The frustration and fear that stem from taking on "bad" cases is exemplified in the case from an asylum seeker named Louis from Cameroon, who lied on the stand and to Rebecca. She also had to travel to Colorado for the trial. Rebecca had received a referral from a religious sister who had worked at Compromiso before. The referral came with some pressure on Rebecca to take the case. "I've been left traumatized by Louis's case. And I don't know if it was that Sister Margarete was trying to prove something to me, or if I wanted to prove something to her…it was a very compelling case and I wanted to win it. But just everything went wrong with that case." Rebecca then concluded, "I need to shadow [more experienced attorneys] at the detention center. I need to see what they ask and how to tell when there are red flags, when not to take people's word…and there is just something about the training that as attorneys we receive and we know what to look for, something that someone else might not be able to do." The need to make work more efficient, then, has led to Rebecca's desire to build clearer boundaries and sharpen tools that can cut through the emotional appeal of cases when the merits of the case make it less than ideal.

CARVING OUT A SPACE: COMPROMISO

On an evening in January 2018, I stay late at Compromiso updating the database on the detainees I had been visiting at the detention center. Occasionally, Rebecca would return to the office in the evenings after she finished her day in court or attending to other

matters, including spending time with her son. Rebecca's visit would be a cherished opportunity to go over cases with her and get her opinion on things. On that day, I walk into her office, an isolated room tucked between the conference room and the kitchen. I sit on an old dining chair, the only one without any files on it. Like the chairs, most of the time Rebecca's desk is also full of files bursting with notes, post-its, and reports. Everyone's desks at Compromiso were densely populated with files or notes. Boxes with more files, and a filing cabinet, surround Rebecca's desk.

As we make small talk, Rebecca tries to show me a legal brief on her computer, but her computer is not responding. It is unclear if it is asleep or shut off. She becomes alarmed, but eventually, the computer turns on. Looking at her desktop, I see a myriad of documents sprayed all over, many overlapping. Just as her desk and schedule, Rebecca's computer feels overwhelmed by the heavy weight of work it carries. "This computer is so full of stuff…" she mutters.

By this time, I have accumulated a few questions and files to go over with her. I want her opinion on them as soon as possible. I would get anxious thinking of detainees whom I had interviewed waiting for a decision on whether we would take their case or not. It was very easy for our attention to shift to new cases. Our conversation begins with the case of Juan Pablo, whose eligibility for a U-Visa application is unclear. Rebecca suggests I ask an activist organization for help with translations. I continue to other pending cases. Rebecca notices that I have my files in a certain order and asks, "Do you have files in order of whether I am going to accept them or not?" chuckling a bit. "More or less," I reply sheepishly. I also know which families seem more anxious to know if we

are going to take their case. It feels like I am trying to channel to Rebecca the anxiety produced in me when family members call the office. It would not be unusual to do so. I have seen Elena, Compromiso's receptionist, pass on clients' and her own anxiety onto caseworkers when she delivers messages to us. As I go over cases with Rebecca, I provide as many details as possible so she does not send me back to the detention center to gather more information. By this time, my insecurity about my interview skills is gaping; it feels like every intake I do has major holes that undermine Rebecca's ability to make decisions on cases.

I discuss the case of a Central American man who brought his family to the United States as soon as his life was threatened, which meant he did not have time to collect evidence of his persecution. His case seems almost impossible to defend in El Paso courts. "What an unrealistic expectation this system has. A smart individual would leave if she knows that she is in danger. Yet the asylum system expects you to wait, relocate, potentially get hurt—the worse the better--, gather evidence, and then leave to a place where your chances of winning are three percent" I remark to Rebecca. She agrees and exclaims jokingly, "We need to do an interjection! We need to tell all the coyotes not to come here! To go to California!" His wife had Temporary Protected Status (TPS) I tell Rebecca, which I think might help. "She left the country…It won't help her," she explains how TPS works and points out how "crazy" it is that the current Administration is going to end it. "They are just going to create more undocumented people! I don't think that man knows what he is doing," Rebecca continues,

> …and the building of the wall! This is just building up to a terrible thing. And they are already going after the people in the lowest part of the pole…the weakest. They have nothing and they are prevented from acquiring anything. This is just like ethnic cleansing. They realized they had the ability to get rid of all these people with TPS, people of color, of course, they are going to end it. This is a perfect opportunity. We might not see many effects of that here because there are not many Nicaraguans or Hondurans in El Paso, but this is going to ravage the country, totally ravaging.

We continue with the stack of new intakes and Rebecca ends up considering helping three of them, which surprises me. One of the cases is from a Ugandan national who is gay; homosexuality is illegal there so a credible declaration should suffice, "…we only have to prove that he is gay! And we have interns that can do the research," Rebecca concludes. We will not take the whole case, but only help with the most immediate need. I notice the mood is more optimistic in this meeting than in others. I was expecting Rebecca to decline almost all cases; I actually prefaced each summary with, "this is a weak case…" and she would agree with me, but then she would look at her phone, look for contacts, emails, and then ask me to scan the intake and send it to her. "In the email remind me that I told you XY can help us with this case," she indicates. In the previous case meeting we also considered helping two new people. In my field notes it is easy to see my cautious optimism: *that is about two asylum cases every two weeks. Things just keep piling up!*

My surprise was shaped by the difficulties the organization encountered in seeing an asylum case through, from start to finish. Involvement in the cases of asylum seekers turns into long and hard commitments, which begin to affect other cases and perhaps even the reputation of the organization. Taking on too many cases translates into less

time and energy afforded to each case, which can end up affecting the quality of representation for all cases. As one of the stated goals of the organization, access to legal assistance should go hand-in-hand with quality of representation. For Compromiso, the last few years had been difficult because the organization acquired debt during the directorship of a man who remains mainly unnamed. One of the measures taken to make sure the quality of representation was not compromised was to carve out enough space (i.e. time and resources) to finish ongoing cases. On another evening, while reviewing cases, Rebecca vented about the position the organization found itself in,

> I just don't know how Compromiso has gotten to the point where it's that organization that is continually struggling and we just can't get out of the hole. We have burned bridges with big funders and now we are surviving with small grants here and there and it's just a lot of work… As an executive director, I just don't know how to get out of this hole. In the next board meeting, I'm not throwing the towel, but I will sound the SOS.

These difficulties affect the work of the office because it considerably limits the hiring of new staff members. Earlier that week, another bigger nonprofit doing the same work was awarded a grant that Compromiso used to receive with ease from a funder with whom, as Rebecca mentioned, Compromiso had burnt ties: "If we had gotten that grant, we could've gotten someone like Michelle to come. She would've left her job like *that* [snaps fingers] to come here." What perhaps makes it a bit more frustrating for Rebecca is that the other organization, in her judgement, does not take on enough asylum cases. "They have to stop being the agency of 'no'" Rebecca reiterated. "…[T]hey have six attorneys and they just continually wash their hands off and they do not take asylum cases. And I understand that the bishop is the director's boss and that they can't take

some of the cases, such as LGBTQ cases. But then I'm put in this situation in which we can help but we have to say no. I hope, and I think it will happen, that this new attorney that they will get, that it will be an asylum attorney so they can start taking some of these cases…" Ultimately, Rebecca feels that she is "…put in this situation in which we can help but we have to say no." In other words, the perception that Compromiso was the last resort for many asylum seekers led to mounting organizational pressures, enhanced by resource scarcity, which frustrated Rebecca and made her work harder.

> Right now, I don't know if I'm coming or going. I´m just burnt out. I basically had no Christmas break because I was at the detention center all the time. I felt bad because Alonso was detained, because Juan Pablo was detained. I had to try these other cases…I just don't have the time to be putting out these fires and still help other people with good cases. I don't know how to arrange the resources to be the most helpful [to] people with strong cases.

We got back to talking about cases. Rebecca was discussing the state of open cases and future steps to take. I was leaving the organization in a week and Rebecca wanted to make sure that everything was ready for the Sr. Caroline to take over my responsibilities.

> I just think that we should just close all the cases that are still pending because I just want people to know where they stand. I just can't risk malpractice if there is no clarity about this. So make sure your Mycase[10] is clean and go ahead and go through sister's as well and make sure everything is closed. I'm sure that it is clean…I think she has understood that I have been saying no to almost everything. But either way, go through her log and make sure everything is closed. Why don't you do that in the days that you have left with us. (Fieldnotes 1-9-18)

The best solution to the mounting number of cases is to close them. Inform detainees that we have either done everything we agreed to or that there is nothing that we can do given the resource constraints of our organization. The moral commitment to asylum seekers in

[10] Software used to keep track of cases.

this context is left unrealized, but it becomes the best course of action considering the hardship it would mean to Compromiso's staff to do otherwise.

Rebecca's instructions reveal a strategy to create administrative "space" that allows the organization to "catch up" and prepare for future cases. A space that can provide the services that the organization sets out to provide. By closing cases, ceasing attachments to cases and clients, Rebecca is freeing up time and resources (both material and human). According to Michel de Certeau (1984) a strategy is "the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power…can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its *own* and serve as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats…can be managed" (p. 35-36). He goes on to enlist three effects in the creation of space: 1) the triumph of place over time; 2) a panoptic mastery over the place; and 3) the power of a knowledge "sustained and determined by the power to provide oneself with one's own place." Thus, Rebecca's strategy allows for a triumph over time, by making more time to work on open cases, allowing her to "see" more of the cases represented by Compromiso, and thus improve the quality of representation. This gives her the ability to show the staff, board members, the public, and donors that Compromiso is hitting the mark in successfully providing quality service to its clients (the asylum seekers she decides to represent). Ultimately, this strategy gives her a better standing against outside "threats," in this case, the government, as well as a bad reputation.

This strategy is not only implemented by declining and closing cases, it is also done by outsourcing the issues in a case that caseworkers are not able to help with, such

as providing therapy. One of the services that Compromiso provides is participation in legal fairs at the Mexican Consulate, for which it receives a compensation. These fairs usually take place on Saturday mornings. The organization sets up a table in the lobby of the consulate, providing advice and help in filling out residency or citizenship forms, among other things. As part of the staff, I helped with these events, even though I did not deal with these forms on a regular basis because I focused on asylum cases. As a result, I would wait for other more experienced paralegals to help me. One of these cases was of an older woman who wanted to apply for citizenship. She told us that she had been living in Ciudad Juarez for the last couple of days because her mother was sick, and she was taking care of her. Meanwhile, someone broke into her trailer home and stole money from it. She was also trying to have her daughter move in with her to take care of the trailer, while she cared for her mother in Ciudad Juarez. She did not want to put her mother in a nursing home because she considered it a betrayal. Moreover, she thought her own mental state was deteriorating because she caught herself putting trash bags on pillows as if they were pillow cases at the Motel 6 where she worked.

In her last crossing from Juarez to El Paso, she explained the whole thing to the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer inspecting her at the international port of entry. The officer probably inquired about her constant crossings and she did not want to lie to them. Then she began to cry in front Melissa and me. “It’s just that one is in the dark and I didn’t know what else to do. That is why I came [to the legal fair].”

Melissa encounters situations like this constantly. Late in the afternoons, when the office is closed, Melissa calls her clients to remind them of upcoming appointments, to

bring a document of further evidence, to sign something or to pick up whatever permit or relief they applied for. She calls her clients on speaker phone in order to look things up in her computer or rummage through physical files. On many occasions I would hear clients explain their hardships to Melissa. Immigration cases overlapped with so many other issues in clients' lives. Although it was important for Melissa to be aware of the complexities of cases she was dealing with, it also made her work more difficult.

One of these evening calls extended over 20 minutes. Melissa's client began explaining a traumatic situation. Melissa then suggested she consider going to a therapist because in order to work on her immigration case, they would have to go over difficult memories, which requires some mental preparation. Without it, Melissa's job might become difficult, and she might even get sidetracked by having to provide therapeutic support (something for which she has no training, time, or resources). "Therapy is really hard. I always tell my clients that it is very hard because you have to [take out] everything." At the end of the conversation, she apologized, "…sorry, it was not my intention to make you cry," and then again stressed the importance of getting counseling. Melissa also suggested that she get her children counseling because she has noticed that children also go through difficult times and that it can manifest in various forms.

From conversations like these, one can pick up on Melissa's resourcefulness as she dissects the entirety of their case, along the way recommending services for problems that an immigration attorney or legal representative cannot address. As seen above, immigration cases bring out a significant amount of a migrant's life. Listening to the entirety of the situation is sometimes necessary for context. However, going over the

entirety of situations can be counterproductive because it takes time, energy, resources from other cases and even rest for oneself. Melissa's tactic, then, not only links individuals and families with resources, it also makes sure caregivers have more time to work on other matters. Thus, Melissa creates distance or space between the immigration case itself and all of the component, often traumatic, parts of the case. Granted this separation is an artificial one, but it demonstrates the carving out of space in order to sustainably care for people.

CARVING OUT A SPACE: CASA ASUNCIÓN

Casa Asunción became overwhelmed with work since 2014, when increasing numbers of Central American and Cuban family units began seeking asylum on the southern border. Regardless of where asylum seekers were entering the United States--ports of entry or between them—they were usually detained for a couple of days in small, crowded cells colloquially known as *hieleras* (ice boxes in Spanish) because they are so cold. Once asylum seekers are processed, they are still kept in detention but moved elsewhere, in order to make sure they follow through on their asylum cases. However, there are not enough family detention centers in the United States, so many family units are released to family or friends in the United States who agree to care for them while they go through the long legal process of seeking asylum. If the family units include a mom and dad, the dad is detained and moms and children are let go. Many of the adults who are released to family or friends are fitted with a monitoring device around their ankles.

Releasing asylum seekers on their own recognizance is a logistical problem because they usually do not have enough money to buy bus or airplane tickets to get to their friends or families. Immigration officials, especially Border Patrol, release asylum seekers at the bus station in downtown El Paso. There, asylum seekers have to borrow phones, ask for money from other travelers, look for food and other necessities, all on their own. In some cases, asylum seekers do not speak Spanish (let alone English), making it very difficult to communicate. Casa Asunción has both initiated efforts to help asylum seekers left at the downtown bus station and been contacted by local immigration officials to help. Immigration does not have the wherewithal to make sure that paroled asylum seekers get to their destinations. Casa Asunción, then, takes on the responsibility of receiving *all* paroled asylum seekers, contacting their families or friends in the U.S., and getting them to a bus station or the airport. Additionally, paroled asylum seekers are fed, given a new set of clothes, and allowed to stay until their bus or plane leaves El Paso.

These tasks can extend all day long. Asylum seekers are usually dropped off by a bus or van somewhere between 1pm and 4pm. By this time, the shelter's director has been informed about how many asylum seekers are being released that day and has coordinated with immigration officials about how many of them will be dropped off at each location. While I conducted field work, the three houses owned by Casa Asunción, as well as two churches and one wing of a nursing home owned by a congregation of nuns, were receiving people. Shelter volunteers on shift-- and those designated to help them-- initially count how many individuals and family units have arrived at each location, and report back to the director. Volunteers then give a welcome speech to

asylum seekers, explaining that they are no longer in custody of Immigration, however, the shelter has strict rules to follow. Volunteers also explain the intake process of the shelter, and what needs to happen for them to continue with their journey. Volunteers then meet with each family unit to fill out intake forms, and call their family or friends (sponsors) to instruct them about how to buy bus or plane tickets. Volunteers have to be extremely clear about ticket purchases: where exactly asylum seekers are departing from and at what time their departures can be booked. Sponsors have purchased tickets out of San Antonio or Houston due to a lack of knowledge of the dimensions of U.S. states like Texas. Casa Asunción also avoids taking guests to the airport at very early or late hours because it is difficult to find volunteer drivers[11] at those times. Guests are able to talk with family for a couple of minutes. Guests are then given toiletries and bed sheets, sent to a clothing bank for a set of clothes, assigned a bed or room, and given dinner at around 6PM. For the rest of the time, guests have to wait. They are not able to speak with family again because the shelter only has one phoneline that needs to be open for emergencies or to receive confirmation information for flights/buses.

From this point on, volunteers have to make sure that the shelters are running according to their normal schedule, and that house chores are being done by long-term guests, while also constantly fielding calls from sponsors to provide confirmation numbers. Volunteers also have to answer questions about traveling in the U.S., immigration processes, illnesses, or any other imaginable question that an asylum seeker

[11] Casa Asunción recruits volunteer drivers from Catholic churches to take guests to airports and bus stations. Regular shelter volunteers only do this in emergencies because the director and coordinators want them resting or doing things at the shelter.

might have upon being released from immigration detention. Guests' emotions range from exhilaration and joy at the prospect of continuing life in a new country, to desperation and sadness due to family separation and the anguish of what happened in home countries and on their journeys. Volunteers' reactions to these emotions also encompass a vast range. At first volunteers absorb all these emotions; it is difficult not to cry at some point in the intake process. With time, volunteers become preoccupied with being effective and fast in order to be able to rest as much as possible during the night. On a regular basis, some of the guests will have early departures in the morning so volunteers need to wake them up with enough time for them to get children and themselves ready, prepare care packages for the road/flight, and provide instructions to the volunteers taking them to the airport or bus station.

Carving out a space for volunteers to effectively run Casa Asunción's houses *after* 2014 has been a continual process. By the summer after I finished fieldwork, the organization had acquired two more buildings and rented various motels, building a network of volunteers to accommodate the nearly 500 asylum seekers released per day. Most asylum seekers were Central Americans from Guatemala, El Salvador, or Honduras, who arrived at Casa Asunción with nothing. This particular group of asylum seekers have to travel through parts of Central America and Mexico that are highly violent places for vulnerable migrants. They arrive at the shelter with no mobile phones, money, extra clothes, or identification because they have spent their resources on the trip or because these items were taken from them by traffickers or immigration officials. As a result, they can neither call family members nor receive money transfers; they are

completely dependent on volunteers and other guests in the shelter. Some of these ICE-released guests talk amongst themselves, but at other times, they quietly sit on the couches in the living room area waiting for their sponsors to call. Patricio, a middle-aged volunteer at the shelter, always pointed out how guests were "bored out of their minds," a realization that was difficult to shake off. The perception of a certain kind of captivity of all guests is difficult to ignore while one is on shift or just walking around the shelter checking that everything is in order.

Every once in a while, guests will get up, walk towards the half-opened Dutch door demarcating the guest and volunteer spaces[12] and ask for a phone call, or inquire if their family has called, or request a snack. Sometimes they step out of the shelter to buy better snacks. This near complete level of control over the movement of asylum seekers makes caregivers' jobs easier. It allows caregivers to recruit helpers at any moment, such as to clean common areas, help with cooking, help bring in donations from someone dropping them off, etc. It is also important that when family or friends call with confirmation numbers for a bus or flight, that they be ready in case buses or flights leave soon. Guests have lost flights because they are not in the shelters when they need to leave for the airport. On three occasions I had to either send guests/volunteers or personally look around the neighborhood for guests whose flights were within the next two hours. Having them be incommunicado also becomes logistically significant. When they have access to phones, by borrowing one from a guest for example, they may begin making their own travel plans that conflict with the ones volunteers have already made or started

[12] Guests are not allowed beyond the door without permission and supervision of volunteers.

making for them. This may lead to wasted time and energy for volunteers or irrecuperable money that sponsors have already spent on flights.

The other extreme of the situation involves Brazilian asylum seekers. Brazilians usually fly into Mexico City and then Ciudad Juarez, take a cab to the port of entry where they claim fear of returning to Brazil to CBP officers. This means that Brazilians have more money, which is evident from the clothes they wear, the suitcases they carry, and the smart phones with Mexican sim cards they use as soon as they arrive at the shelter. They also carry cash. Given these circumstances, Brazilians are offered the option of staying at the shelter or going to a motel near the airport where they can also find better food (nearly all of them fly to Florida, Massachusetts, or Philadelphia). Even though we tell them they are welcome to stay, we also tell them that they will be more comfortable elsewhere. Volunteers make it a goal to convince all Brazilians to stay elsewhere, which turns this task into a private challenge or competition of sorts. Volunteers high five each other when they convince the Brazilian guests to leave. The main reason why volunteers do this is to reduce their workload. Additionally, Brazilians tend to be more outspoken, and thus ask more questions and complain, again, creating more work for volunteers. Because they have phones, the chances that they will come up with their own plans without telling volunteers increase. They also take a long time to make a decision whether to stay or leave; they get caught up in conversations with their sponsors and families while trying to assess the best option for themselves. Volunteers are not against helping Brazilians out; some of them clearly have no resources at their disposal.

Volunteers are just weary of being blindsided and spending too much time with the intake process.

On one occasion during the spring of 2018, I was on shift at Casa Asunción. All ICE releases dropped at the shelter that day were Brazilians. My field note says that it was a long day because almost all of the Brazilians decided to stay. Because I tried to convince them to leave, and they needed to investigate what their best option was—whether they could afford a motel room, how soon they could get a ticket to their destination, how long they were willing to wait in El Paso, etc.—it took a while to get the intake process started. All but two families decided to stay that day. Those that wanted to go needed to know if flights out of El Paso to Florida and Boston were available, and if they could buy their tickets with cash. Afterwards, I called our usual cab driver, a friendly guy who enjoys speaking Portuguese and asks us to call him every time we host Brazilians. An hour later, one of the Brazilian families returned saying they could not afford the 500-dollar tickets to Florida available that evening. The father told me the other family was able to afford the 1000-dollar one-way tickets to Boston. I had to conduct the intake for the family that had come back, and give specific instructions about the shelter to a man who had brushed me off earlier when I had initially tried to talk to him. This time again he told me, "I have no head for this…I've spent five days without speaking to my wife!" He had a child with him. He stepped outside to buy a sim card in order to speak with her. Once he got back, he struggled to get the telephone numbers and international codes right. I helped him out. I was not able to finish the whole intake process before dinner, so I had to finish afterwards. Once dinner was over, I had to

conduct the weekly house meeting. Because we had a group of college students staying in the house for the Border Awareness Experience offered by the shelter, the meeting took longer than usual. The hectic nature of the night made me forget to text Isabel, our house coordinator, the details of a flight confirmation, a slip of mind that almost led to a guest missing their flight. This level of intensity during shifts makes it necessary to reduce menial tasks as much as possible in order to make sure the critical ones—such as travel arrangements—get done fast and well. It explains why Casa Asunción prefers Central American guests and works hard to convince Brazilians to leave. Why Sandra, one of the volunteers at Casa Asunción, hides the fact that she speaks Portuguese from the Brazilians, or that Casa Asunción maintains such a strict control over the flow of information between Central Americans and their friends and families.

Just like Compromiso, Casa Asunción employs a strategy to reduce the feelings of being overwhelmed that are caused by exterior threats. Casa Asunción creates a space where volunteers and staff members have mastery over the house, and power emerging from the knowledge created by that mastery. This strategy helps reduce menial tasks, although it is not infallible; volunteers often create special bonds with guests that lead to more work. Nonetheless, the strategy allows volunteers to "see" migrants and asylum seekers, which allows them to make sure they do not miss their flights and follow the rules of the shelter, among other things. It also allows volunteers to extract information from asylum seekers and their families, and to manage that information. This makes the shelter's operations more effective, and increases the sense of control among volunteers and staff. It also results in more time to rest, which in turn reduces feelings of frustration.

TAKING CARE OF MIGRANTS THROUGH THE CREATION OF SPACE

In the previous chapter, I compared the ways in which three different spaces *cared about* migrants and asylum seekers in El Paso, leading to particular politics of care across those spaces. In this chapter I look at how two non-profit organizations, Compromiso and Casa Asunción, "take care of" the operations that provide care to migrants. This is a particularly difficult task for caregivers because strong attachments are formed with migrants, and with the work itself. I show that caregivers are affected by casework. They become frustrated and burnt out by increasing levels of work, few positive outcomes, and policy uncertainty. They use moral frameworks to explain their involvement with migrants and other marginalized populations. They also express feelings of inadequacy or guilt, indicating a moral responsibility to others.

This level of emotional attachment to caregiving enhances the dilemma of providing a service when there is a lack of resources and an increasing number of cases: the more people you try to help, the lower the quality or effectiveness of the help. To manage this dilemma, caregivers deploy a strategy that I call "carving out a space" in which organizations streamline operations by increasing control. In the case of Compromiso, increasing control means reducing the number of legal cases accepted to better serve those who are already receiving help. This requires outsourcing work that does not pertain to the organization. At Casa Asunción, caregivers have little control over the people they help because the director has made the decision to help *all.* This translates into a form of control that almost completely immobilizes asylum seekers. It seeks to

outsource as well by trying to convince the group of asylum seekers with more money and that tend to create more work, Brazilians, to stay elsewhere.

Carving out a space has clear consequences for migrants and asylum seekers. Most cases will not receive legal representation, so that legal efforts can continue in the long term. Shelters might not be able to impact the long term, especially legal, status of asylum seekers, but they will provide broad and immediate relief. Ultimately, carving out a space promotes the wellbeing of organizations and its members so that caring activities can continue in the future.

In this chapter I analyzed how organizations and individuals in stressful environments organize spaces to help migrants and asylum seekers. These practices deal with the extrinsic elements of care. In the next chapter, I delve deeper into the intrinsic aspects of care to show the emotional contours of caregiving. This analysis illustrates another facet of commitment in the efforts to help migrants and asylum seekers.

Chapter 5. Caregiving and the Reflexive Potential of Positive and Negative Emotions

As illustrated in Chapter Four, taking care of things that enable the provision of face-to-face support to migrants is draining. Caregivers have to organize and reorganize spaces of care in response to migrant flows and immigration policies. In this chapter, I illustrate how spaces of care are also a product of the relationships between caregivers and care receivers. This relationship is based on exchanges: care is given when care receivers are disposed to be helped. In the case of asylum seekers, for example, caregivers provide shelter or legal aid when migrants agree to follow the rules of the shelter or agree to tell their stories to paralegals or attorneys. This kind of direct care is imbued with an aesthetic component, the pleasure of helping. Paul Leduc Browne (2010) calls this aesthetic component of care the "care effect". This concept will be helpful in conceptualizing negative or ambivalent emotional experiences as well. I argue that both positive and negative emotions lead to reflection that can strengthen commitments.

The care effect describes one of the most attractive and visible manifestations of helping migrants at the border. It shows how care is co-produced by both caregiver and receiver, as well as how the aesthetization of care can conceal the exploitation of workers or the ill treatment of care receivers in care industries. Sometimes this co-production can turn into a spectacle. The media attention on caregiving efforts and protests after the Trump Administration's zero tolerance policy is a clear example of this. In this instance, caregiving efforts were framed as morally admirable, the right thing to do.

In this chapter, however, I am more interested in showing how the care effect is constituted through repetitive acts to meet migrants needs, acts which in turn inform the attachment caregivers feel for migrants and for care work. This is important because through these attachments, caregivers shape the initial commitments to the movement and its work. They are also the foundation of key challenges caregivers encounter along the way.

Following Browne's (2010) argument, I focus on how the effects of an aesthetic of care, or the care effect, enriches the everyday lives of caregivers. For Browne, there is a close relationship between beauty and truth, which gives aesthetics an ethical dimension. Caregiving broadens caregivers' horizons about their position in the world they inhabit, making them feel more connected to humanity. Thus, the care effect is the link between face-to-face caring practices and the moral sense of solidarity.

This is an important question because how care is provided helps us understand why it is provided. In *The Need to Help,* Liisa Malkki (2015) illustrates how isolation drives elder Finnish volunteers towards humanitarian work with strangers, in which they sow stuffed animals that the Red Cross sends to African countries. The Finnish volunteers' geopolitical location both explains their ability to help as well as their *need* to help. Similarly, the caregivers I worked with seek a connection with others while also meeting personal, political and/or spiritual objectives. Their ability to do this kind of work is informed by their social position, in particular, their legal and middle-class backgrounds. These personal and structural factors give life to the care effect in the immigrant rights movement at the border.

To begin with, I demonstrate how "feeling needed" allows the care effect to take hold of caregivers. Repeatedly, caregivers encounter needs they cannot meet and others they can. So, they fully engage with the latter. Meeting migrants' many "meetable" needs ultimately shifts the attention of caregivers. The menial tasks themselves recede to the background as the care effect emerges, broadening the awareness of caregivers to the joy of *convivir* (Spanish for live or spend time together). In other words, feeling needed is a habituated sense of being helpful, itself pleasurable, that keeps caregivers engaged in the coproduction of care with migrants and asylum seekers. In the second part of this chapter, I illustrate how "feeling needed" can also result in negative emotions, in particular, feelings of guilt and ambivalence. I argue that negative emotions, also co-produced, nevertheless fuel caregivers' attachment to migrants and the work of helping them.

FEELING NEEDED

Before a planning meeting for Casa Asunción's annual fundraiser, Marcos, the director, began the prayer with a reflection about how CBP and ICE were dealing with increasing numbers of migrants seeking asylum. CBP releases qualified families due to space limitations in detention centers. These families are usually released to Casa Asunción in El Paso, where the organization arranges transportation with family members or friends (sponsors) anywhere in the country, from where the families will continue to report to ICE as their asylum cases progress. At this time, Marcos had just learned that ICE was arranging travel for paroled migrants. This often means ICE releases families to a bus station where they wait anywhere between a few hours to a

couple of days. They must buy tickets and fix any issues with little assistance. Migrants are left to their own devices to eat and satisfy any other needs they might have, many times without money. A lot of times migrants and asylum seekers do not even know where they are, and speak neither English nor Spanish. This is particularly concerning to Marcos because the organization has always been willing to help ICE with travel logistics: Casa Asunción has the experience and ability to train volunteers if the resources are there.

On this day Marcos explained to volunteers that from a practical point of view, he did not have standing to ask ICE not to detain migrants. If he asked ICE to release them on their own recognizance, the responsibility to help migrants find their way to their families or friends in the US would fall on him and the shelter. And at this time, he did not have the space or volunteers to provide hospitality. While the bishop had asked parishes in the diocese to consider taking on the role of receiving refugees, Marcos lamented that "One parish invited me to speak to the pastoral council. That was the only response". With frustration, he explained to us that he was "beyond angry with my government…I'm beyond angry," yet kept harking back to the responses of religious communities. At a meeting with 15 pastors from across the country, he told us, "from different denominations and they all came in and, I'm sure that when they left, they must have said, 'we could've done without listening to him' because I came very heavy on about 'where are you as a church…where are you? *where are you*?'" Marcos' tone underlined the moral imperative to help the stranger in need that Christians hear so much about. Marcos told us that he pleaded with the pastors saying, "you got to stop coming

down to the border to analyze and to study and to research, you got to stop doing that and you've got to go back and open your church and your pews and take in people. You have to do the hospitality and *I promise you* that if you do the hospitality your heart will be changed. It will."

Marcos is committed to a life of service. In a common reflection with volunteers, he shared how he would ask himself, 'how am I taking up space? What am I doing with my time?' He found that the 'preference for the poor' gave him an answer. Casa Asunción celebrated its 40th anniversary while I conducted field work and Marcos has directed the organization throughout these years. His commitment to hospitality spoke of the purpose it had given him and others whom he had met at Casa Asunción. And he was protective of the experience of service. That is why he bemoans those pastors who come to do research. He restricted my access to conduct research for over a year. Marcos was worried that if I wrote about volunteers' complaints against each other, or even migrants, conflicts within the "volunteer community" would ensue. He implied that journalists and academics are only interested in publications. At the same time, Marcos is an inspiring educator who participates in his own Border immersion trips for students and parishioners from all around the country. I came to understand that Marcos was mainly concerned with maintaining a functional shelter that centers poor migrants and refugees' needs.

The "preferential option for the poor" explains this reasoning. As I discuss in chapter one, the "preferential option" is a Christian social teaching that encourages preference for the well-being of the poor and vulnerable in any society. This sentiment is

usually grouped with the idea that Christians should treat the powerless as they would treat Jesus Christ. This does not translate into an adoration of the poor, but rather, experiencing a challenging moment with the poor, to gain spiritual growth and/or peace. While not everyone in Casa Asunción or Compromiso is Catholic or religious, I find this idea is congruent with social justice frameworks.

Marcos's prayer on this day illustrates this theological approach to service,

> Mother Teresa would always emphasize, make me worthy to serve my fellow human brothers and sisters…God we give you thanks today that you allow us to be in your vineyard…you find us worthy…and you enlighten us, you fill us with an awareness, an insight of the many faces that you got…you say we have been created in your image the many images that speak to us of who you are, God. We pray that the work that we do, the commitment that we offer, that it could somehow help to be a call to other people to also join and be in the vineyard. It is very, very painful to see you basically alone… to have a child, to be hungry, to not have food, to not have any money to do anything about that, to find yourself going and basically begging. Change our hearts, make your church a vibrant church. Make her church a committed church…a spirit-filled church that understands what it means to be a church of hospitality. We ask this in the name of Jesus who modeled this for us. Amen.

This model of service appeals to the idea that it is a privilege to work with the poor; an experience that is insightful and can influence others to serve. It also emphasizes the urgency to the call. When considering the limitations of immigration agencies to house asylum seekers, then, Marcos feels he cannot even criticize them because he cannot do much either.

Marcos' conundrum reveals how caregivers frame their work in moral terms, and how they feel needed at the border. Although feeling needed can be a stressful experience, it is initially experienced as satisfying connections with migrants and the work of helping them. For Mayra, who works at a local nonprofit as a policy researcher, visiting a detainee at the detention center is something that allows her to feel closer to the object of her work: detained asylum seekers. "When I am doing this, I forget about all that happens [in the office]." On this particular day, she had worked all day on a report, then we met at the local university and sat in on a three-hour research methods class to recruit students for court observations, and then she headed off to the detention center. I was surprised she was going to the detention center that night given it was 8PM. "Yes, I have to see if she has representation because she lost her case *pro se*." Mayra had built a relationship with the detained woman, and was now helping her find an attorney who could appeal a judge's decision. Mayra is in one of two organizations that send volunteers to visit detainees to provide company and help in whatever capacity possible. Sometimes they translate documents for detainees or look for attorneys who can represent them. Speaking directly with detained migrants, hearing their stories, and building a friendship constitutes a connection that makes one feel needed.

These simple acts of care generate a powerful pull to continue helping, especially when the care receiver is thankful and cooperative. While asking Patricio, a middle-aged white man from the East Coast, about his motivations to volunteer at Casa Asunción, he first gave me a typical response I heard from many caregivers: that he wanted to make things right and show people that Americans are not so bad. He added that he always

wished them luck in the US when he dropped off migrants and asylum seekers at the airport. And then he added, "I guess deep down inside I can say it's not altruism, but feeling needed," He continued,

> I mean, I like to feel needed too. I don't like to feel like I'm just going around in circles. So, I feel like this work, even if it's just needed because we need a driver, it's like great, all the way to, you know, they needed to connect with people, help them out, make a difference.

Patricio spoke French, so he had been instrumental in talking to French-speaking detainees and parolees. He became close with a Congolese guest at the shelter and would let her use his computer to communicate with home and to arrange a place to stay in the US. Small acts like these are easy for volunteers, but made impossible for guests to do by themselves. Patricio recognizes that arranging small tasks can be exhausting in the long term, but they are central to keeping the shelter running.

> Casa Asunción has been around for decades and it did really good work, but in order to function it needed people to do the day-to-day stuff—you know, for example, this lady…needs diapers for her kid. I mean, this [other] man's child hasn't eaten in three days because he is traumatized…how are we going to get the child to start eating? …they're tiny things and that can be motivating.

Meeting the many needs of migrants became a theme in conversations among volunteers at Casa Asunción. These conversations would be about the incessant requests migrants and asylum seekers make, particularly to the volunteer on shift. Countless requests for oranges or apples, shampoo, detergent, medicine, and the phone to speak to relatives in Central America or the US. And all of this in addition to all the other tasks that come with being on shift. These tasks are easy, and the harder ones, volunteers are often not allowed to do (such as calling guests' relatives). In the case of Patricio, he felt more

appreciated when Marcos made him coordinator of a temporary shelter, in other words, when he got more work and responsibility. He said, "I felt more useful; I felt like I could make more of an impact." He continued, "…I enjoy being coordinator…just getting stuff done and checking with people, like, 'Where are we at?'"

Jacob, an undergraduate student volunteering for the summer, told me he enjoyed the chaos of running around helping migrants settle in the shelter. He relished the thought of being able to talk about this with his future grandchildren. He along with a fellow volunteer had already been interviewed by a major national news outlet. I immediately thought of the famous British war recruitment poster picturing a daughter asking her father, "Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?" The excitement of caregiving can feel like a mission.

In our interview, Jacob went on at some length about Annette, an older religious sister from a Catholic order working at the shelter who would continually fall asleep during our meetings. Sr. Annette and Jacob lived and worked at Casa Vida where the Social Security guests stayed. Jacob was amused by an instance when Sr. Annette melted ice cream in the microwave to give to a guest who could not have cold things. The patience and disposition to appeal to the tastes of a guest seemed puzzling to Jacob. A waste of time. Jacob's disapproval of Sr. Annette's intimate form of care compared to his approach illustrates a gendered division in caregiving. While simple tasks promote engagement, differences in approaches to these tasks also allow caregivers to fulfill their gendered notions of care provision.

James, a white man in his twenties from the Midwest, explained in our interview that he considers himself well suited for this kind of work.

> The work doesn't require a lot of expertise or qualifications or anything. It's quite simple…I guess it's recognizing the need of—but it gets more personal than just seeing something that needs to be done, I think partly because of the nature of the work is personal. You meet people. You hear bits and pieces of their stories…you get to know them, interact with them, become friends.

James cuts himself off as he is about to say that the work is simply about recognizing the needs of others. In actuality, this simple work repeatedly becomes inconvenient. A mantra that volunteers learn during training is that one should expect to be inconvenienced because you are always on call unless it's your day off. As one of the drivers in the shelter, James would have to be prepared to take guests to the airport or the hospital at a moment's notice: "You'd be in the middle of something [and] you find out that someone's flight is confirmed in two hours from the moment and you have to leave immediately." At the same time, the tediousness of driving fades to the background because for James, it is the care effect that is in the foreground: "every time we open a door and welcome someone in a way that's warm and accepting…that's a victory."

Volunteers feel needed when guests look for sympathetic ears. In the shelter, women were the most disposed to this form of care at a moment's notice. Sandra, a white college graduate from the East Coast, told me how ubiquitous trauma is at the shelter. Sandra expressed the joy it brought her to help traumatized migrants. "…I really enjoy guest welfare stuff—enjoy is the wrong word, but that feeling I feel good about…when someone is—just needs to talk and needs advice—not even advice, just process something." Usually, this activity does not require much "expertise." Like James, Sandra

highlights the simple tasks that provide an opportunity to connect with migrants. Before coming to Casa Asunción, Sandra had worked at an elementary school in the West Coast. At the shelter, she continued working with children, this time by tutoring, doing homework with them, and talking to them about their problems. "I don't want any of [them] to be suffering and I want [them] to thrive and I want to be part of making that happen."

Sandra gave me more details of what talking to guests can look like. One day, four people went up to her crying.

> Zulema was just freaking out a little bit. She wasn't really crying but just like talked for a long time and Santiago was crying and saying, 'I'm going back to Juarez.' And then Santiago was like, "Wait, can you talk to Pilar?' I was, 'Yeeaaah.' Antonia was being mean to her, and she was sobbing. And somebody was already in the office so I took her to the night cover room…Sometimes that happens.

The vulnerable states of people in the shelter continually lead to these scenarios. Sandra told me that people, including volunteers, "just look for somebody they have *confianza* [trust] with and they'll be, 'Yeah, I want to talk to you about this thing.'" She admits that her fluency in Spanish, warm personality, and leniency with rules makes guests want to talk to her. Sandra's availability to talk would lead to more and more requests. Putting herself in this position is precisely what she went to the border to do. When going over her motivations to volunteer at the shelter, Sandra told me that "…it's just more people coming across the border, the need keeps happening. Things getting even more evil makes me not want to leave the border…" When I ask her to explain what she means by "evil," she replied:

> Yeah, just more evil like more work to keep doing. Just the immense need motivates me…Whenever I could actually do something for a person to make their life less shitty…I can visit you in detention, I can translate your document for you. I can talk to you. I can talk to you through a thing [gestures to indicate phones at detention centers].

Sandra does not provide a specific answer to what evil she is talking about, loosely referencing a whole set of enforcement practices to tell me it creates work. This is work that she can "actually do," meaning, there other larger, "evil" issues she cannot address. Sandra mentions work at the same collective as Mayra. This work has to be done in the afternoons, usually after working hours. Like Mayra, Sandra finds visiting migrants in detention centers an escape from the stress of the shelter. "…the detention center, it's weird because it should be the most depressing place, and it is, but also…just sometimes at the House people are frustrated with you or whatever…at the detention center every time I've gone, the person has been so happy that I visited." The concrete help Sandra provides generates a care effect, which solidifies her attachment to the work. It also provides Sandra with an escape from stressful situations that dampen how good helping can feel. She continues, "…when [everything] is spinning out of control with the news it's really nice personally to be able to look at a little thing and be, 'cool, I'm going to spend two hours translating this declaration for you and that's a concrete'—I like sitting and doing it, something I can do." And also, something she can finish. Sandra, like many other caregivers, feels overwhelmed with the news and the work the news announces. Small, concrete things she can tackle give her a sense of successfully meeting needs, reinforcing the utility of her presence at the border.

Staff members at Compromiso shared a similar interest in seeing the impact of their efforts. Valerie, a year-long volunteer from the Midwest, shared past volunteering experiences, telling me she had been in Guatemala, Ecuador, and Colombia for short periods of time. “Some people go on to volunteer things for like a couple of days or like a week.” She had spent a month in each country, adding “I felt like I was cheating the people out of—they were taking time to teach me something and then I left. So, that is why I really wanted to commit myself to a year because then I felt like I could actually be an asset somewhere or at least try to be.” Valerie thinks about time and effort as a measure of her helpfulness. She continued telling me that two years would have been ideal at Compromiso because if she had stayed another year, “it would [have been] really good because they wouldn’t have to retrain someone, and the learning curve is really steep.” Valerie illustrates how she feels needed at Compromiso. A lack of resources for permanent staff and her sense of proficiency as a paralegal solidify her attachment.

Feeling needed also enters the terrain of representation. Caregivers expressed to me and other staff members a sense of privilege and responsibility that comes with hearing migrants’ stories. They feel the responsibility to inform their communities about what is happening at the border. Patricia, for example, feels the responsibility to maintain the “dignity of the person that’s our client…and tell these stories in a way that makes people realize this is real and this is happening.” Like other caregivers in El Paso, Patricia explained to me that given her position in the US as a citizen, her voice has more weight than migrants’. Patricia had been to Central American as a student to volunteer and considered going back after college. Ultimately she decided to stay in the US because of

Trump. She felt there was enough to do here. Additionally, she felt that "in the US, I can work for people who aren't able to [have a voice]. It just made more sense that if I wanted to serve people, that I wanted to do it in the United States, and work with migrants from countries that I had these wonderful connections with and that got me so into the idea of service." Again, distant social positions between volunteers and migrants makes volunteers feel like they can do more, feel needed. The ensuing "wonderful connections" create a pleasurable effect that keeps them in.

Those who are not experiencing this effect feel its absence. Patricia was part of a regional volunteer group that places people with different border organizations. All volunteers share a house. While expressing her frustration with housemates, she told me that sometimes they get anxious because they are not getting as much work as she is. "…sometimes when I come home and I vent about my day or something that was frustrating, they get really anxious because they're like, 'Well, I'm not stressed. Should I be stressed at my work? Like, am I even doing anything?'" Patricia's housemates express an anxiety about whether they are doing enough to help; that perhaps they are not needed, or at least not like Patricia.

NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

Guilt

Guilt is a moral emotion. It develops when power imbalances shape moral expectations in relationships (Kemper, 1978). Guilt in the immigrant rights movement of El Paso continually surfaces among caregivers. Their social position as middle-class

residents or citizens contrasts quite starkly with the vulnerability of migrant and asylum seekers. Typically, this emotion flares up when the personal, organizational, or political commitment caregivers make is undermined by interminable work obligations. Simple commitments to visit someone at the detention center, conduct an intake interview, file a request, or call a client back build up, leading to stress and guilt. A pending task can become an emergency. Thus, guilt is mostly produced in situations where caregivers think they are not doing enough rather than doing something hurtful. While Browne (2010) emphasizes the co-production of care as an aesthetic experience, in what is left of this chapter I argue that negative emotions are also co-produced in care relationships. Negative emotions also have an aesthetic character, and thus, offer an opportunity for social reflexivity (Lichterman 2005), that is, an open and critical conversation about how caregivers relate to migrants.

Beatriz, a long-term volunteer at Compromiso, tells me that she feels undervalued for her clerical efforts at the organization. For years she has volunteered with the organization but remained stuck with clerical work and never transitioned to working on actual immigration or asylum cases. Despite her perceived marginal role in the organization, Beatriz expresses guilt for not doing enough, "…I go home feeling guilty because I'm like, 'I could have done this, or I could have done that, or I could have changed the way I said this.'" Beatriz's position in the organization shows that even those with less intense contact with migrants feel guilt. Guilt emerges under the same conditions as feeling needed: resource scarcity and a limited, yet relatively simple, list of tasks.

Rebecca, the director of Compromiso, shares a similar sentiment of guilt in our interview. One evening, Rebecca tells me, she was arriving late to a meeting at her office when a woman approached her in the parking lot to ask about the organization's services: "And I was a little upset, because I felt…I just felt like, really cornered." Rebecca told the woman to come back when the office was open, and then felt guilty because the woman could tell she was annoyed. "And then after she left, I thought, was that a test? I felt like a jerk because I felt I could've been kinder." A sequence of negative feelings--feeling cornered, annoyed, and then guilty—in this interaction also creates an occasion for reflection, or the care effect. Rebecca broadens her perspective to similar situations, gaining self-awareness in the process:

> And then at times that I've been fed up with the job, and when I say fed up it's because I'm tired, it's because I don't feel like we can get enough done, I don't feel like I'm helping enough. There's times I don't feel like I'm paid enough and I feel like, you know, what am I doing, why am I struggling? Why am I putting my son through this? And then it just goes back to my faith. It just goes back to truly feeling like this is a calling…

The process of confronting and resolving negative feelings involves reflection, and this reflection provides reassurance and purpose. Rebecca's revelation starts pointing out the more stubborn, structural roots of her problems—resource scarcity and the immigration system. The revelation, however, also provides Rebecca a way forward to continue helping and contributing to the community of immigrants in El Paso.

At Casa Asunción, caregivers' relationships with teenagers are a constant source of guilt. The shelter often takes in unaccompanied minors while they undergo legal proceedings or figure out where to go next. Teenagers bring a lot of energy into the

shelter and demand a lot of attention. Patricio, introduced earlier, was Ernie's case worker for a few months. Ernie was an unaccompanied teenager from Central America, living in Casa Asunción, who began attending school in El Paso. Patricio describes his relationships with guests as usually positive, "but there was one failure," he explains, "I didn't do what I was supposed to do, and I know that. I abandoned him." Patricio did not say whom he was talking about, but I knew it was Ernie. Patricio did not have patience for Ernie's rambunctiousness and failed to make a connection with him. "…he is a teenager in need of human contact, you know? So, I should've been checking with the teachers and being all sorts of proactive…so I feel like I just dropped the ball and Sandra picked it up." Either way, Sandra was leaving in a couple of months.

In my interview with Sandra, Ernie came up. "I feel extremely anxious about leaving Ernie and he doesn't help because he's, 'I'm going to cry so much when you leave.' …Part of me also feels guilty about going to [graduate] school…" At the time of our interview, Sandra was getting ready to end her year-long volunteering stint. She had been accepted to graduate school on the East Coast which would put her closer to home. She was excited at the prospect of hanging out with family more often. Yet she felt conflicted about leaving the teenagers: "How can I even justify leaving the border…I'm not sure if I should've gone to [graduate school] at UTEP and still been in the house a lot and still hung out with the teens and bond here when I could." Another revered volunteer had done exactly that, later completing an online law degree to eventually become an immigration attorney in El Paso.

In some instances, the teenagers are the ones who leave first. Santiago, another unaccompanied teenager, lived in the shelter for a year before he left without informing anyone. He, too, had disciplinary run-ins. On one occasion the police called Marcos in the middle of Passover Seder/Easter dinner because Santiago had been stopped for driving without a license. The night Santiago finally left, Alice was on shift. Alice had been struggling to get everyone in bed by 10PM, the shelter's closing time and mandatory sleeping time. To make sure this happens, volunteers on shift have to check all rooms and count every guest to make sure everyone is in the house. But that night, guests were straggling, so Alice was not able to account for everyone:

> So, there's like a lot of different things going on so I forgot to check on Santiago. And so, when Ernie told me the next morning that Santiago hadn't returned home, I just remember feeling my heart plummet. I remember searching the whole house and texting Marcos and Isabella about it and just feeling guilty that we hadn't known sooner.

The situation with Santiago was difficult to control. Alice recognized this: "not like knowing sooner would have prevented anything…" As someone who witnessed these stressful events, I was surprised with the calm demeanor of Isabel, Santiago's case worker, when she heard the news of his departure. She told me she expected something like this to happen because according to her, Santiago was not used to the support he was receiving at the shelter. Not everyone felt the same. Another volunteer, Sylvia, was visibly upset. "You just don't do this to people," she said obliquely referring to Santiago being in the wrong.

One thing is constant at Casa Asunción: guests and volunteers are always coming and going. Yet, some departures can be particularly upsetting. Santiago's was one of these because there were moments when he was a joy to hang out with. Volunteers and other guests felt similarly about him. Yet, the distance that Isabel appeared to have taken was also part of the job at the shelter. "I think it really speaks to this dynamic that we're in," Alice continued, "of like being responsible rule enforcers but also having these very intimate connections with people living and working in the same house." The care effect here, the sense of a shattered connection, again, provides an opportunity to reflect on the kinds of relationships migrants and caregivers have.

My experience with guilt and other negative emotions is not much different. While I was working at Compromiso, Rebecca asked me to conduct an interview with a Central African man. This case should have been easy, given the transparency of gay persecutions in his country. The request to interview him had come from a group of attorneys in another state. It took me a while to go see this potential client because I received many requests at that time, and wanted to honor as many as possible in the fastest fashion. By the time I returned the completed intake to Rebecca and the rest of the attorneys, three weeks had elapsed. A sense of emergency was growing: the attorneys thought too much time had passed. Losing time in situations like these can feel like a blunder, causing someone's deportation or continued detention when it could have been prevented. The attorneys reviewed my intake and concluded that it was poor because of the lack of details. They suggested Rebecca send an experienced attorney in order to gather necessary information and establish attorney-client confidentiality. A credible

declaration would suffice given that persecution was a policy in this country. My field notes at the time illustrate how I felt:

> …I took so long. Now that I am counting the time, I feel even worse. But I had already been feeling bad, sick, and super stressed with other stuff. It's not like I have been sitting around doing nothing. I have been super busy…I guess there needs to be a better job at prioritizing work. That in itself is hard! It's easy to forget things! Even if I write them down…There is just so much going on. I still feel terrible.

I put my oversight down to my cold and the mounting amounts of work, but it is clear I still felt guilty. Rationalizing the lapse does not make me feel better. Even though I was aware that errors happen, indeed errors are to be expected, I felt guilt pour down on me like a bucket of cold water.

Emotional flows

Just as guilt is shaped by social context, emotions also shape immediate social contexts. Immigration enforcement can have sudden impacts on migrant families, causing emotional waves to sweep over them. As migrants seek help, desperation, frustration and anger can often be directed to organizations like Compromiso and Casa Asunción. In Compromiso, Elena, the receptionist, would bear a significant part of this impact. She received the bulk of the phone calls from family members concerned about their detained relatives or friends. She would hear out family members' stories, questions, frustrated remarks, and sobs. Elena would usually tell them that we were doing everything we could and case workers were very busy. What else could she say? But frustration could turn into anger, with callers often saying curt goodbyes or hanging up on her.

During the calls, Elena filled out formatted slips of paper with basic information about detainees: name, date of birth, nationality, A(lien)-Number, and name of detention center. I would fixate on the slips piling in my box when I was the intake specialist. I wanted to catch up with the interminable to-do list, try to be on top of things. I did not want to keep detainees waiting. On any given day, Elena would greet me and then pass on anxious messages for help, freeing herself from them. "Oh, thank goodness you are here. I have a question for you," was Elena's typical greeting as staff members walked in. Most of the urgent cases had to do with individuals we had or had not visited at the detention center; family members we had not contacted; and deadlines that had not been prioritized.

On one occasion, Elena greeted me with a message from someone who had just lashed out in anger on the phone, hung up, and called back to apologize. The woman wanted someone from Compromiso to visit her detained husband. The husband had gone back to his home country to attend his parents' funeral. "Poor people," Elena ruminated, "but because you guys are so good at your jobs, you can get him out!" Elena's comment struck me as both complimentary and darkly humorous. More likely than not, we would not take the case on, and even if we did, it would be almost impossible to win.

I sat on my desk ready to figure out the situation. I first had to establish where this man was detained in order to determine if we could help him at all. Elena had written down the names of two detention centers. I looked for the detained man on the ICE locator tool online but I could not find him. I called ICE, but there was no record of him. I called his wife. She was very concerned and there was a tone of supplication in her

voice. She told me she had been calling many places; that she had a bag full of little pieces of papers with phone numbers written on them. Some organization in Dallas had given her Compromiso's number because they told her we were close to her husband. I asked for the name of the detention center. Her husband had spelled out to her the name of a place on the other side of Texas. The woman lamented in frustration that her husband had left the US to attend a funeral: "He made the most important decision of his life and left this country…and they are dead!" I informed her that we would not be able to help because her husband was more than ten hours away from El Paso. "Oh, Mr. Alejandro, I don't know what to do anymore, I am in agony…I was able to gather money for him to cross back to the US from people we know and our church …I don't know what to do anymore…I am so worried." She pleaded for us to go visit him. "The lady who gave me your number told me my husband was in Texas, close to you!" I repeated that I would not be able to go all the way to where her husband was detained. I offered an alternative. "Let me give you a phone number of…" and she quickly interjected, "Oh, no! I've already been given too many phone numbers." I told her that I understood, "but this other organization will be able to provide better information about your husband. Look, the organization is affiliated with the Catholic Church and they have helped many people in your situation. Would you like the number?" She relented, "Oh fine, give me the number then. I am going to call them. It's just that, you don't know how worried I am. I don't know what to do anymore. I need my husband--we depend on him." I gave her the number. She ended the conversation with great warmth, "Have a good Thanksgiving and a beautiful rest of the day. Thank you!" I almost choked. How could she be so nice to me

after I declined to help and left her with nothing more than yet another phone number? I felt upset that I could not do more to help her. I also felt relief that she was not terribly upset with me at the end.

In a chain that came to me from Elena, I passed on the anxiety and frustration of this woman's case to another organization like Compromiso. Cases, and sometimes parts of cases, get passed on among service providers, as does the emotional labor they entail. While I was left with many unresolved feelings, I had to just keep going with the rest of the cases waiting for me.

Mixed emotions

Working in an environment of enhanced enforcement and scarce resources means that caregivers will not be able to help the majority of migrants and asylum seekers. Few exceptional and winnable cases receive significant attention and resources, as discussed in the previous chapter. But in order to sort through cases, caregivers must meet potential clients or guests, and confront the pain they carry with them. This encounter is never easy. Summoning the care effect is exhausting and at times impossible given the mental and physical state of care receivers. Many encounters can be deeply unsatisfactory.

As a participant observer, I navigated some of these dissatisfactions. Seeing men and women behind a plexiglass, hearing many similar and a few exceptional stories, and speaking through a telephone handset, are all common experiences for caregivers. The tears that roll down migrants' faces either snap you into your caregiver role or confound your ability to speak. I would always try to look away, towards my forms or the edge

where plexiglass meets the wall. Caregivers typically say something along the lines of "I know what you mean" or "I understand your pain", even though we do not really know or understand. We are exposed to it. We see it, we hear it, and indeed we are moved by it, but to really know the experience second-hand is impossible. In this section, I will explore caregivers' relationship with this perpetual unknown as it relates to the care effect.

Saul's chances for relief were scant from the beginning. Originally from Central America, Saul had lived in the United States for years when he was deported. Upon arriving to his country of birth, he was extorted, beaten, and left for dead by a criminal organization targeting deportees. Saul tried his luck crossing the border again, but without success. He was apprehended and his prior deportation order reinstated. After serving time in federal prison for re-entry charges, Saul was sent to a detention center in the El Paso region. His public defendant reached out to various attorneys and organizations to see if anyone could help with his case. In the end, Compromiso hesitantly agreed to conduct an intake. We eventually accepted his case to help him apply for a U-Visa.

I visited Saul on many occasions to determine his eligibility and to get signatures. On one such visit, I found Saul particularly distraught after a teleconference hearing. Without legal guidance, he had not been able to adequately request a bond. He was frustrated with himself. Additionally, his underage son had a hearing the same day because he was caught drinking alcohol. He was overcome with helplessness and broke down during our meeting. In our next meeting, I was relieved to see him in a better mood.

I did not have any news for him, though. Rebecca had been unavailable as she finalized a grant application, locked in a room with our administrative staff. I could not determine the next steps in his case. I had also been busy visiting detainees, trying to see as many people as possible, as soon as possible.

Saul did not seem to mind that. He told me that my visits made him happy. I told him once again that I would be back to see him the following Thursday with an answer for him. "Well, on Thursday you will be able to get me these answers…on Thursday I will see you then…" he kept repeating. I emphasized that it was not a promise, that I might not be able to come, but that I would try. I added that I would at least call his brother, who is in contact with Saul, to let him know if Rebecca would take his case. Ultimately, I was unable to visit him on Thursday. I called his brother on Sunday, when I could muster the courage to tell Saul's brother that I didn't have news.

Anxiety builds around visiting detainees and speaking with their family members because expectations are high. We are expected to be fierce in the face of urgency, to do something—anything—to try to get detainees out as soon as possible. Caregivers are constantly running into walls, though: the ability to help often depends on others' ability to help us first. It is frustrating to wait for this assistance. In this case, I was frustrated waiting for Rebecca's help. The Central American man's patience was calming for me and illustrative of his role in co-producing the care effect in me.

That same day I interviewed a man from Central Africa. He was a little surprised that I had gone to see him because he had been transferred from one detention center to another. I conducted an interview to see if he qualified for relief. His story was similar to

other Central African men I had talked to or heard about. When I finished my questions, I repeated what I say to everyone at the beginning and end of every intake interview: I was there only to gather information; I would take the information to our attorney so she could come up with a decision. I gave him an agreement sheet indicating that my interview did not mean we were representing him.

Then he began telling me that he was frustrated with what organizations like Compromiso were doing. He had asked another nonprofit organization for help; they sent someone to interview him. A few days later, he received a letter indicating that they would not be able to help him, something that I knew was going to happen with Compromiso. And just as Compromiso does with declination letters, the other organization sent him a list of attorneys he could call, which he considered useless because he did not have the money to pay for their services. “So, what is the point? You get my hopes high, just for nothing”.

I wanted to convey to him that I understood he was frustrated--I had seen this frustration before and I had felt frustrated being in my position as well. I explained that deciding on cases was not entirely in our control because organizations like Compromiso do not have the resources to help everyone. The disappointment on his face made me think he knew we were going to reject his case, and he was right. In these kinds of situations, I take out a list of immigration attorneys that Compromiso usually mails with declination letters so that detainees can start looking for other options—I do not want to have people waiting on our decision when I suspect it will be negative. The Central African man saw what I was doing and told me that he already had a list of attorneys.

“They don’t answer the phone” he told me. I felt guilty and embarrassed. I kept trying to excuse myself with half formed sentences about how our resources were poor and how we only had one attorney.

“I know that you are doing your job. I am actually surprised that you came. I don’t know how you tracked me down”. That made me feel slightly better. I kept sitting in that small visiting room hoping I could get a bit of…something else. Something from him that was not deep disappointment and frustration. “When will I know?” he asked me. I told him the following week. “Is that it? Can I go?” he asked as he folded the copy of the agreement. “Yes, that is it.” He got up, and knocked on the small window of the visiting room. The guards take about a minute to get there, so he just sat there, facing the door in silence while I waited for the next detainee. A guard opened the door and he left.

On my long drive home, I had time to reflect on these moments. I felt the weight of my position. —The unfair incarceration of potentially traumatized refugees for asking for help in the United States was constantly on our minds. But there was such little we could do to help detained asylum seekers. I began entertaining the idea that we were causing harm by giving people false hopes. That our efforts to document cases and show the community, donors, and grant organizations that we were meeting and orienting people in this situation, were ultimately futile. Was our caring about this problem doing harm? These were part of my fieldnotes that night:

> When I was on the drive back to my house, I just felt like shit. The man from Central Africa was in my mind. I felt bad because I kind of felt predisposed to think that we were not going to take the case. I felt like this because Rebecca has had a hard time with cases from Central Africa and I understand why. I can’t imagine trying to do one of these cases because of how much coordination with

> family members it takes. I have worked on these before with Central Americans and it is tough to get documents. Anyways, I realize this is a preconceived idea that in the long run I use to reduce the energy invested in a case. And then I realized that when he told me that he knew I was doing my job, I felt better. I felt better because he didn't hate me as bad…Which made me think that part of what one is seeking from migrants is their approval. You want them to thank you, not to hate you. Not because you think you deserve the thank you, or because its good manners. But just to establish that they don't hate you for raising their hopes and then denying it through a letter.

I was let down by my role in a system that does not necessarily help people get out of detention. I felt guilt. Before I saw the Central African detainee, I knew Rebecca would deny the case. I was partly there to respond to this man's call; in fact, I tracked him down in New Mexico because ICE moved him out from the El Paso detention center. But confronting this man, who guarded his hope and questioned the purpose of my presence there, made me feel complicit.

I appropriated the man's frustration with ICE, nonprofits, and me as a paralegal, and used it to reflect on my complicity. The fact that it made me feel better when he acknowledged that I was only doing my job, was only further evidence that I cared about his opinion of me and of Compromiso. Caregivers are sensitive to what migrants and asylum clients think of their efforts, for it informs their feelings about the work. It lets them know whether their work is appreciated or not; helpful or not; no matter the final result. I say no matter the final result because it often felt like we were in a losing battle, and that we along with the migrants, just wanted to lose with some dignity. And because so much emotion goes into the care work, the emotions that are bounced back are so

important in understanding the effect of caregiving. And that is why the approval of recipients can be so important.

In my interview with Melissa, an experienced staff member at Compromiso, she explained to me with some disgust that she felt that she got more out of helping clients than clients got from her help. I struggled to understand this sentiment at the time, especially because clients showered us with countless acts and words of appreciation, so much so that it can feel monotonous. But the following situation I write about in my fieldnotes clarified how client's emotions towards our work helped shape it along:

> Today, when I was typing his declination letter, I wanted to make it known that I knew he was frustrated and that we had failed him in some way. I added the part of the lack of resources and how it was a disservice to him and other clients if we keep taking more cases. It still felt empty. I could imagine him getting the letter, opening it and not even reading it. It's tough. But sometimes I also think: what were you thinking coming to this country?! Did you think the government is just going to let you in?! come on?! But I know those thoughts are misplaced. I really can't think of another place that would take him. Europe is not very welcoming.

I was unable to write a satisfactory letter. My explanation about the lack of resources available, as well as the damage we could be doing to other people's cases, did not make *me* feel better. I have no idea how it made him feel, but I could certainly imagine it. I imagined he felt frustrated, deflated, hopeless, and in crisis. This could have sent me into a state of anguish and despair, and made me try something else to help this man. But I turned to a common trope that also made me feel less implicated in the man's imagined anguish: I became frustrated with him and his decisions. Ahmed (2004) proposes an ethics of pain that recognizes that witnessing the pain of others does not mean knowing the pain of others. Because we cannot know what the other feels, we assume what they

feel, and this transforms their pain into feelings of sadness, guilt, frustration or ambivalence in us. I felt this happen with myself in the field, and I saw other caregivers go through similar experiences.

One of the longest cases, and with the highest profiles, that Compromiso has worked on dealt with a journalist, Alonso, who had been repeatedly denied asylum. He would sometimes visit our office with homemade burritos or cookies. The following excerpt describes one such day, when many of us staff members sat in the office's kitchen, eating the Mexican wedding cookies he had brought us.

When Ana came in, she gave Alonso a long hug, as if someone had died and we were in a funeral. The mood was similar to the one after we accompanied him to court and his case was denied. Alonso asked Ana if she had an aspirin or ibuprofen, she said no but wondered if maybe Elena had any. I immediately offered the tube of Advil I carried in my bag. He took one of the two pills left. "You don't want the other one?" I asked him. No, one should be enough, he replied. Then they offered him water. "No, I will dissolve it in my mouth." 'Dissolve it in the mouth?' I thought, "that probably tastes horrible." It felt like he didn't want to bother anyone. His son, Alberto, immediately handed him a plastic bottle of blue Powerade and Alonso took a quick swig. Sister Constance commented on how good the cookies were. She also asked Alberto about his hat. It was a Washington Redskins cap. They asked him if he was a fan of the team. "No, my dad brought it to me when he went to Washington." Alonso had gone to Washington to receive a prestigious journalism award. "I don't have a team; I almost don't like sports because everything is

fixed--It's all just a ploy to make money." His cynicism was a bit saddening. Ana commented, "yeah, but it's very exciting to see Mexico play!", but the conversation went back to how sports are all rigged.

Alonso and his son's sullen mood illustrate a complex dynamic between caregivers and care receivers. Caregivers' attempts to make a situation light and pleasant can be met by obdurate responses. On another occasion while eating lunch with Sr. Constance and Melissa, this topic came up. Melissa had been going to the detention center to visit Alonso and Alberto after they were detained. She confessed that she did not know what to say to them in her visits. When Melissa said this, I felt relieved. I often felt that way with them and other clients. I am shy, and I am sure that plays a role, but it made me feel much better to know others went through the same experience.

Feeling the frustration and pain of migrants dealing with immigration agencies can also mobilize caregivers to take risks. Sr. Constance had become attached to the story of a Central African asylum seeker whose child had died on the way to the United States. The details of the death were unclear, but it appeared someone had killed him. Such a devastating story stuck a deep chord with Sr. Constance; she went to visit the Central African man more than once to conduct intakes and follow ups to gather all the necessary details of his case. Sr. Constance did this despite Rebecca's declination of the case. "There has to be something that can be done!" sister kept telling me in the office we shared. She decided to email a high-ranking official at the detention center to see if anything could be done about this case. She had gotten the email address directly from

the official. Sr. Constance had worked in the detention center as a chaplain for two years and knew the official from that period. But her role as an intake specialist at Compromiso put her in another position altogether, one in which reaching out to high-ranking officials was reserved for urgent cases and was perhaps only to be done by an attorney. Sr. Constance probably suspected this. Sending an email to the official would bypass the bureaucratic process through which ICE exerts discretion. It could potentially make the organization look bad.

However, Sr. Constance was more afraid of the case slipping through the "cracks." Sensing the indiscretion of the move she was about to make, she hesitated: "I am going to do it. I explained the whole situation to the [official]. I'm going to send it to him in an email asking for relief. Should I do it?" I was taken aback; I didn't know what to say. I would have never done anything like that, but I knew that nuns and priests had special privileges in these situations. They were viewed as having moral authority, which made it easier for them to break the rules. She continued, "Oh, I don't know...I think I'm going to do it! You know what? I'm just going to do it. That way I can have a peaceful night. It's just the story is so terrible and sometimes things just slip through the cracks. I just want to bring it to his attention to see if he can do something." I just shrugged. I was curious to see what would happen. She pressed send.

Sr. Constance was thrilled afterwards. "You have to do what is right" she declared and continued, "thank you God for giving me the opportunity to do good." Sr. Constance never received a response.

Just as positive emotions are key in creating and strengthening attachments, negative and ambivalent ones also work towards this goal. This is because negative emotions also allow individuals and groups to reflect about their relationships with migrants and work. In her book about the movement ACT UP in the 1980s, Deborah Gould (2009) explains that not all feelings are articulatable. Some emotions are "never an exact representation of our affective experience…[and are] better thought as an approximation" (Gould 2009, p.21). When these nonconforming feelings are experienced as a group or society, they become affective states or "structures of feeling" as Raymond Williams named them, opening the doors to imagine new possibilities. These negative or ambiguous affective states can lead to new ways of feeling about helping migrants, for example, thus leading to new manners of relating to the work. For caregivers in the border, guilt and ambivalence strengthen the attachment to the work.

In the following chapter, I investigate how care can shape the moralities that bind caregivers to their work. As illustrated in this chapter, caregivers strengthen their attachment to the work by doing it. One of the effects of strong attachments is burnout. Burnout is one of the most prevalent emotional states that I encountered in the field. It is not only an emotional state, but a physical one as well for the feeling of exhaustion permeates the body. These emotional and physical dimensions of burnout require coping mechanisms in order for caregivers to continue with their tasks.

Chapter 6. Familial Morality and Detached Attachment: Reponses to Burnout

In this chapter, I begin by exploring how caregivers' attachments to migrants develop in and through intimate spaces and family-like bonds. Caregivers frame their relationship to migrants and to their work using familial tropes, what I call "familial moralities" (Márquez 2021). The logic of families belonging together lies at the heart of this morality. This solidifies attachment. This continues Chapter Five's emphasis on how caregiving can produce positive and negative emotions, that nonetheless, stimulate reflection. However, while caregiving and movement participation require an attachment to people or a larger mission, *too much* attachment leads to stress and burnout. The care effect emerging from face-to-face caregiving is gratifying, but it does not protect from physical and emotional exhaustion. I describe how burnout emerges in Casa Asunción and Compromiso. I show how caregivers, despite burnout, sustain and frame their commitment to caregiving, and through caregiving to movement participation. I call this "detached attachment," a coping strategy in which caregivers create physical and emotional distance from migrants, while maintaining a cognitive attachment to their work (Márquez 2020)[13].

[13] Sections of this chapter have been reproduced in my papers "Familial Moralities: Moral (Re)Source of Commitment in the Immigrant Rights Movement in El Paso, Texas" in *Humanity & Society* and "Detached Attachment: Burnout and Commitment among Caregivers in the Immigrant Rights Movement" in *Critical Sociology.*

INTIMATE PRACTICES AND SPACES

Upon graduating from college, Alice spent a year in a refugee resettlement office in the Midwest before volunteering for a year at Casa Asunción, a migrant shelter in El Paso, Texas, on the U.S.-Mexico border. As a live-in volunteer, Alice and the other volunteers "live where they work," which shapes their interactions with migrants for the duration of their service. Ordinary and special moments—like birthday celebrations—take place in a domestic context where familial relationalities emerge. Alice finds these moments some of the most fulfilling of her experience helping migrants and asylum seekers:

> I think when I remember my most positive times here at Casa Asunción, I think it will be celebrating with the guests and just like having fun with them. It's that really sweet moment of – bittersweet moment really of them being away from their family and that being challenging for them. But then being a part of this like other space where we are people who are coming together to celebrate something even though it's not the same as being together with your family.
>
> And I think that's really special, bittersweet but very special. Even just like getting to – I don't know – see guests in the house and say hi to them when I'm going up the stairs, trying to like wake the teens up in the morning and it being like this weird not like a parental figure but this sort of parental figure…

Alice provides an example of one of the "most positive times" at Casa Asunción, yet she has to correct herself and redefine it as "bittersweet" because guests are not with their families. These mixed emotional moments not only describe celebrations, but also domestic and intimate interactions, such as greeting one another in the shelter hallways or waking up teenage guests for school. Alice tries to come up with a vocabulary to define her relationship to teenage residents and the best she can do is "sort of parental figure."

The familial ties Alice invokes form part of a morality that I encountered among various caregivers in El Paso, Texas, during my field work.

At both Compromiso and Casa Asunción, staff members and volunteers highlight the atmosphere of camaraderie at the organization as a central motivation for caregiving. Individual motivations, friendships, stories, and personalities infuse these nonprofits with a sense of warmness and solidarity. Melissa, the director of Compromiso's Crime Victims Program, shares the story of how she got her name. Her father named her after his babysitter, who had been a victim of domestic violence. The fact that Melissa works with domestic violence victims gives special meaning to her work.

Rebecca, Compromiso's director, always notes the joy of small victories and the energizing privilege of helping migrants. The myriad of clients' photographs and cards on Rebecca's office wall attests to this. She also keeps a worn-out stamp of Pope Francis taped on her desk, next to the keyboard, and an image of the Virgen de Guadalupe looking over the world on the wall of her office. Sister Constance, the detention center intake specialist, also invokes her faith while understanding migrants' experiences; her quest is to see Jesus in the faces of vulnerable people. Younger staff members talk about their career aspirations—such as going to law or social work school–in light of the election of increasingly conservative politicians. They feel the need to 'do something', and get satisfaction from working in a team that gets along and is led by inspiring women.

Valerie, a twentysomething volunteer from the Midwest, explained to me the kinds of practices that help her deal with the stress of being overworked in an office with

few resources. She told me she liked to read, journal, and talk to her roommate, who was also volunteering with a legal office. She then added that she thought the working environment at Compromiso was conducive to reducing stress: “I also think our office environment is very open to checking in on each other and being friends, more than coworkers. Rebecca – I don't think you guys were here yet, but she's planned self-care days a couple times.” Similarly, Clarissa, a twentysomething Mexican American from El Paso working as a paralegal, described her learning process of the complexities of U.S. immigration law, like this:

> Rebecca always helps me learn and grow. I mean I've grown so much since I've started there and I've learned so much than when I first started there. But I mean even with Marcy, when I was working under her, I would make a mistake, but they never made it like – made me feel like I was dumb, I guess. Or less, you know, because I made a mistake. If anything, they were very – I mean Rebecca is and Marcy was very good at explaining to me what is it I did wrong or what I needed to fix. Yeah. It's been good learning opportunities.

Similarly, Victoria, a twentysomething white woman from the Northeast, explained how the environment at Comprmiso was different from other law offices she had worked in.

> I think I was happily surprised by working there and I'm interested in continuing to work there – maybe partially because of how it's – compared to other contexts similar to that that I've been in, it's very casual and maybe more emotionally driven than like – the other organization I worked for for legal aid was very like – it was very much a law office. And Compromiso is – yeah, like, you've been to our staff meetings.

Victoria gestures at me because we have both been to these meetings that feel less like serious organizational gatherings and more like informal discussions over casual lunches.

At Casa Asunción, the commitment is more demanding due to the organization’s live-in requirement. Volunteers hail from all over the country, and most of them spend

either a year or a summer at one of two houses operated by the organization. Some volunteers are interested in the transcendental nature of their help, such as finding meaning in their lives and putting faith into practice. Others have strong political convictions aligned with human rights, feminism, and communitarianism. They are inspired by other staff members who make sacrifices to live and work at the shelter for years; and they too participate in this lifestyle as they seek human connection with migrants. The shelter provides a less than perfect space to put these ideas in action because of the regimented nature of work there. Despite this, volunteers told me they simply enjoy the chaos of the work and knowing that they are at the forefront of a historic moment in U.S. history.

Sylvia, a white twentysomething volunteer from the South, told me that she felt she had made the right decision to volunteer when touring the shelter for the first time: "This feels *good*…this feels *right*." (emphasis hers). Located in downtown El Paso, Casa Asunción provides hospitality in a triangular, red-brick building from the early 20th Century whose colorful, yet worn out interior gives it a charming quality. Sylvia added, "Everyone is eating together and everyone is hanging out…people are being nice to each other…it's a really special place." Another white volunteer in her twenties from the West Coast said that "there's like an earthy spirituality of just like being here at Casa Asunción and just like connecting human to human. In that sense, just like living within that space of like humanity." Patricio, a middle-aged white man from the Northeast volunteering at Casa Asunción explained to me that he is a solitary person and realized that living with other volunteers and migrants would be different but, he told me,

> I found myself—although there were times that I went to my room and closed the door, I also found myself seeking out—like I found myself a great number of times going to the [shelter's living room] and wanting to be out there just to see who was around and chatting with someone. I enjoyed that, so I knew that somewhere inside of me was a social being.

The live-in requirement for volunteers at Casa Asunción can also make the space feel suffocating. Alice, whose reflection on the memorable and 'bittersweet' moments at Casa Asunción opened this section, complains about her first room in the shelter, the same one I use during field work, because the volunteer kitchen and the doorbell are right next to the room. "…it was just so much noise all the time. People on the phone in the volunteer kitchen and people on shift all hours of the day. And the doorbell ringing. It felt very overwhelming…I needed to have space for myself." Significantly, in both positive and negative experiences, volunteers characterize the space of these organizations as intimate, because of the types of relationships and feelings emerging from them.

This perception of a warm environment at Compromiso and Casa Asunción is a result of, and sustained, by caregiving practices. The care work conducted in both organizations involves sharing space but mostly sharing intimate stories about migration, families, and life histories in general. Staff and volunteers initially work to create intimate links with migrants, and with each other. Clarissa tells me she decided to continue volunteering at Compromiso even after her 20 hour-internship ended because of a harrowing declaration by a client during an asylum case:

> I remember afterwards I cried because it was just so emotional. Like just reading through their declaration and just reading how much trauma these people have or that particular person went through, you know, I just kind of – I think part of that and like me crying – well, I'm an emotional person. But like me crying helped me

> want to continue there after I finished the 20 hours… it just seemed crazy to me that other people in the world experience this type of violence, and it made me feel like if I continue working there then I can continue doing more.

Clarissa frames her crying as a result of being an emotional person. But the crying signaled to her the severity of the problem, convincing her to help with more such cases at Compromiso. The practice of translating intimate material led her to continue caring about asylum seekers and wanting to help them.

When caregivers cannot provide assistance to migrants due to lack of organizational resources, they reduce the amount of intimate details they hear from migrants and asylum seekers. Victoria described to me how she tried to maintain a distance from parents separated from their children because she did not want them to think Compromiso was representing them. Regardless of how many times she told them that Compromiso was not going to represent them, the intimacy experienced in interactions with migrants can be a powerful pull to want to help them, as I experienced myself while conducting intake interviews with asylum seekers. In this case, Victoria was gathering general information about parents' cases that would be helpful in organizing future responses and resources. She explains that it was a difficult dynamic: "how much should I actually let them share? 'Cause like, the more they share, the more they feel like we're probably somehow being accountable for their situation when we're actually not." Caregivers have to be careful in building emotional attachments with clients in order to, as Victoria put it "not feel everything these people express because it's just not great for anybody, I don't think, and it doesn't help me, really. Like, I wouldn't be able to do this

work if I felt all those things all the time". Caregivers at Compromiso, then, have to manage the intimacy created with migrants.

Caregiving at Compromiso demands intimate information, often leading to emotional reactions and contributing to the creation of intimacy between caregivers and care recipients. Here Clarissa explained how the practice of filling out forms with clients can lead to sharing more than mere facts about a particular immigration case.

> And there have been like some people come in expecting to just – us to fix their life or something. But yeah, I mean we try, I guess. Anything that we can help fix immigration related, yeah. But I mean it happens where like I'm doing like filing petition and then the husband comes in because he's like "I don't want to deal with the process," so we just kind of yeah, we cut like they – it's like they vent to us, you know, about their whole stories and process, just what they've been through. It's like we're a source of, I don't know, therapy or something for them sometimes.

Clarissa's experience illustrates that migrants might not have avenues to express themselves emotionally while undergoing stressful immigration processes. Compromiso affords a space where clients can, and do, vent.

At Casa Asunción, the production of intimacy is different because the sharing of information is not for the purposes of a legal case, but rather for purposes of hospitality, travel arrangements, and casual conversation taking place in a domestic space. As Marcos, the founder and director of the shelter explained, when migrants meet volunteers and staff at the shelter they see us as the "bosses" but eventually "the longer you're there, then elements of friendship, elements of trust begin to grow and develop." Living for extended or even short periods of time within a house leads to attachments. Eating

together, sharing house chores, and communal leisure and play, all create an intimate space.

Commitment requires more than warm environments or sociability, though. Moral (re)sources help materialize social change struggles in the long haul. I find that the intimacy generated and managed in these spaces is accompanied with what I call "familial moralities". Familial moralities is a frame that links the practices in these intimate spaces to a morality that makes sense of caregivers' efforts, and keeps movement members attached to social change activities.

FAMILIAL MORALITIES

Caregivers usually begin their work at Casa Asunción or Compromiso hoping to help and build relationships with migrants in concrete ways. Yet, obstacles with state agencies, their own organizations, and migrants themselves prevent the realization of their expectations. In these circumstances, family is a "moral source" (Lowe 2002) that shapes caregivers' commitment to helping migrants. Attachment to family frames understandings of the work of care.

During the orientation at Casa Asunción, we were told to be prepared that the work involved continuous inconvenience. This inconvenience involves making sure the shelter is running efficiently, and that all guests are safe at all times. These tasks can feel never-ending. Sandra explained to me how her attachment to the work and to migrants changed with time:

> Ever since I've stayed here, I've become more about individual guests. When I first got here I was all hands on deck, really physically need me as a body, a

> person who can communicate in Spanish, like, I feel like they were like, "Here, hold this box" and handed me a huge box metaphorically and maybe literally…I feel at first there was a lot of need and now I feel it's more, if I thought about leaving early: "Oh, I couldn't leave the teens". Yeah, it was all I need to like yeah, if I just like leave all of a sudden it would be really shitty for Ernie. I felt like that with Santiago when he was in the house. Yeah, I think that has made me stay out a year, almost now, even when I'm like I don't know if I want to stay….I feel accountable just like individual people, the people I was visiting at the detention center and the teens and the guests has been – I don't know if it's switched but it's been added to my reasons for being here, I guess. But the teens especially we're kind of their parents.

Sandra expresses the need for her physical presence in order to help migrants. Being handed over a big "box" is an apt description of the many tasks involved in running a shelter. Yet, Sandra does not want to finish her commitment "early" because she is concerned the teenage guests at the shelter would have a hard time without her. Her emotional attachment becomes directed at individuals, because she feels caregivers are "kind of their parents."

Isabel, a white twentysomething coordinator for one of Casa Asunción's houses and who had volunteered for more than six years while I was there, uses a similar metaphor to explain her commitment to work. She explains that she prefers text-messages over phone calls because they allow her to screen non-urgent requests for help from other volunteers:

> But I like to be available 'cause, like I said, it's like my husband. It's like the house is my spouse…I want to be there for the organization 'cause that's what my life is at this point…when I have my days off every week, I'll be around the house sometimes just chilling. I like to be able to say, 'No.'

The important thing for Isabel is being "available" because the shelter is like her "spouse." She uses a kinship metaphor to make sense of her attachment. When I asked

the shelter director, Marcos, if it was difficult to establish caring relationships with guests only to encourage them to leave and be self-sufficient, he told me:

> Well, I think, Alejandro, that it's – you know, there's subjective pull with that. You know? I think every parent finds it real hard when their kid moves out, and yet every parent intrinsically knows: That's what I want for my kid to be able to go stand on their own two feet and live in the world, and function in the world, and take care of themselves. So, yeah, I think there's an element of that.

Marcos frames relationships with guests as a parental one, in which you support them in order for them to "stand on their own two feet." Marcos has not only held this viewpoint, but materialized it when he helped a group of siblings whose parents had been killed in the Salvadorian civil war in the 1980s come to the United States, later becoming their legal guardian. The idea of Marcos as a father figure looms large in the view of younger guests who sometimes joked while I was a volunteer that all the volunteers were Marcos's children.

Nonetheless, there are some attachments that are perceived as unhelpful in keeping the shelter running. Alice told me in an interview that Isabel had warned her about spending too much time with male guests. She explained to me that volunteer-guest relationships are "odd", which I understood as complex. She added,

> I feel like I felt more comfortable with that relationship when I first got here and like my first five months. But then I remember that I felt like I had really been bonding with the teens. And Isabel sat down with me and she's like "You can't be spending one on one time with the teens or with men in the house. You need to be more intentional with how you're spending time with guests."

Isabel was afraid that friendships between Alice and guests could be misinterpreted or that Alice or guests might develop romantic feelings for each other. In the past,

volunteers have developed crushes, romantic feelings, or have had relationships with guests after moving out of the shelter. All volunteers are warned about the possibilities of these attachments during our orientation. The "Volunteer Guidelines" packet we received in orientation says that it is "not unnatural or uncommon to develop feelings for people with whom you live and work." Yet, it categorically forbids these relationships because they are "unethical and immoral".

The relationships that form in Casa Asunción are structured by the intimate space and domestic practices of the shelter. I find that the shelter creates familial bonds, with volunteers treating migrants and the shelter itself *as family*. Ultimately, these familial bonds strengthen caregivers' attachment to their work.

At Compromiso, however, the legal nature of caregiving does not allow for the kind of domestic intimacy seen at Casa Asunción. Nonetheless, familial moralities inform caregivers' relationships with clients. Valerie, the legal assistant, describes the support she provides asylum seekers, most of whom do not have a support network while they are detained in El Paso,

> So, I also realize that with a lot of asylum clients, they don't have a cheerleader. So, that's different from our like dock clients or our family petitions because they have a support system here, for the most part. But for a lot of asylum clients, they've left everything. You know, sometimes they've left their kids and their families back in their home country.
>
> I'm not sure if I cross lines with giving people hugs instead of handshakes but for some clients, I know that just getting up in the morning is a task. So, I tried to be very considerate of especially asylum clients, of like giving them flexibility when they need it. Especially if it requires writing declarations and things like that that are harder. I'm going to miss the clients. I'm going to really miss them. I also learned through this job that I need to work with people…Like days when I'm just

> sitting at my desk without any client interaction or anything, I don't get as much fulfillment out of it because I love to see people and interact with people.

Valerie is deeply conscious of the difficult position her asylum clients are in. This awareness drives her flexibility with them, for example, when it comes to writing difficult declarations. It also drives her to fulfil a role she thinks family would normally fulfil: being a cheerleader and giving hugs.

Kamila described her motivations to work at Compromiso as getting to know her mother's and family's history in South America. Kamila's mother migrated to the United States when she was 27, but Kamila does not know the reasons why her mother moved, "…most of my life has been, as annoying as it sounds, has been trying to learn about my mom." Kamila's mom does not share much about her past, whereas Kamila seeks out more and more information because she realizes a lot has been lost in the process of migrating,

> There's shit that is gone that I'll never know. It just seems like everything else seems fucking meaningless. Being able to connect and connect my work is in some way in conversation with that is pretty motivating to me. And it's like hard to find a lot of motivation because everything is so bad.

The connections Kamila draws between her family and work motivate her in the adverse context of the border, where she sees little hope. Kamila's efforts make her feel more connected to her mother: "…I think negative emotions can be very inspiring or motivating. This work is too fucking tragic, so there is some inspiration that is not like exploitative. It's more reparative or something. It feels inspiring because…I don't know why it feels creative…" The creative element that Kamila describes is difficult to grasp,

but the work of connecting her family's past with that of recent migrants to the United States is for her reflexive, intellectual, and productive.

For caregivers who are from the border themselves, familial moralities are implicit in their motivations to help migrants and asylum seekers. Like Kamila, Rebecca's interest in becoming an immigration attorney also stemmed from her family's immigration experience. Her aunt and cousins were clients of Compromiso when Rebecca was in high school in El Paso. Her mother passed away around that time and Rebecca took over a lot of her responsibilities, such as helping her aunt fill out immigration papers and giving her rides to Compromiso. The power that the immigration attorney had in her aunt's case caught her attention,

> Whether she was available, whether she could give them an appointment, whether she could just explain to them that the process was taking a long time and that it was normal. She had such – this power and I thought, you know, I wanted to be that person. I wanted to have that. I can't explain why, but that was the first time I ever had the desire to be an attorney.

When I ask Rebecca if she knew she wanted to be an immigration lawyer when she went to law school, she replies, "ever since I knew that [my family] had an attorney, I wanted to be that person to another family." This desire to have some control over immigration cases affecting immigrant families like her own illustrates the significant imprint of Rebecca's family on her work. One of her office walls is covered with letters of appreciation to her. During ice-breakers involving answering why one was involved with Compromiso, she would always mention clients' gratitude and how she didn't feel like she deserved it.

The familial morality shaping caregivers' commitment at Compromiso occurs *through family* stories. It draws on the relationship between care work and immigrant family histories. It is this intimate understanding of immigration as a family issue that reaffirms the moral commitment to helping migrants.

Compromiso and Casa Asunción differ in how familial moralities play out. At Compromiso, caregivers draw from their own family histories or normative conceptualizations of family to make sense of both, the experiences of migrants, and their own involvement with migrant communities. This inspires them to learn more about the immigrant experience, as with Kamila, or to provide emotional support to families, as with Rebecca. Valerie, who is not Latina or from El Paso, is nonetheless aware that asylum seekers lack familial support, which informs her interactions with them. If we think of attachment as a spectrum that combines intellectual and emotional aspects, then the familial morality that Compromiso members deploy is on the intellectual end of the spectrum.

In the case of Casa Asunción, morality emerges from the relationships in the "new family" created at the shelter. Staff and volunteers describe their commitments in terms of "parental" or "spousal" obligations. These descriptions do not reflect back on their own familial histories, but rather, reflect on the new relationships they build at the shelter. This is mostly explained by the lack of recent immigration histories among the mostly white and non-local volunteer community at Casa Asunción, as well as the kind of domestic and intimate space that is created every day through the activities of eating, playing, cleaning, and talking. As a result, the familial morality of Casa Asunción

members is on the more emotional end of the intellectual-emotional spectrum. Familial moralities deepen attachment. In the next section, I explore attachment in relation to burnout.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT AND EMERGENCE OF BURNOUT

In addition to being composed mainly of white volunteers, Casa Asunción was also seen as radical for two reasons. First, the social justice model of the shelter involved living in the shelter in solidarity with migrants and asylum seekers. Volunteers—mostly from middle and upper middle-class backgrounds with disposable money—did not get a wage. However, they were provided with the rooms, food, clothing, toiletries, etc. that the organization acquired through donations. Second, young volunteers espoused feminist, humanitarian, and abolitionist ideologies and countercultural aesthetics that contrasted against the backdrop of a religiously-oriented shelter. The volunteers at Casa Asunción were both invested in the wellbeing of migrants and asylum seekers and at the same time in awe of their fortitude. All would reach their physical and emotional limits while caring because there was always something that could be worked on. Their ideological commitments, either religious or political (and in many cases both), met material obstacles when put in practice.

At Compromiso, the ideological and religious impetus to help migrants was less apparent due to the professional veneer of the office. Office staff was underpaid considering their experience and workload, and long-term volunteers sometimes received stipends, depending on the availability of funds. The staff's connection to migrants was

qualitatively different compared to volunteers at Casa Asunción. Most staff were Mexican-American and co-ethnicity led to some familiarity, especially with non-detained migrants who were usually from the border region. However, a longer time helping migrants in a bureaucratic setting, along with class difference, also created some practical distance that was unlike the idealization of migrants I saw in Casa Asunción among non-local volunteers.

In both organizations, paid or unpaid care work is a function of seniority. Nonetheless, both paid and unpaid caregivers experience burnout. Paid caregivers have more administrative and managerial responsibilities. At Casa Asunción this means coordinating volunteers in each house or having an executive position in the organization, which entails coordinating with immigration agencies, procuring funds, paying bills, etc. At Compromiso, paid staff work legal cases or administer the office. Those with stipends or those volunteering have administrative or supporting legal roles. Thus, in both organizations unpaid caregivers are less experienced and thus more likely to stress about the development of cases. Paid workers experience different stressors, usually having to do with the responsibility of sustaining services.

As Byung-Chul Han (2015: 7-8) describes it, burnout emerges due to "excess positivity" of an "achievement society" generating pressure to succeed in what *can* be done. Not achieving these goals, according to Han, leads to depression and estrangement. For caregivers on the border dealing with resource-scarce organizations, uncertainty in policy implementation, and clients'/guests' traumatic situations, "achievement" is rarely possible. Despite their hard work and sacrifice, caregivers seldom achieve desired results.

Here I illustrate how frustration and burnout is produced in caregivers' interactions. The practice of caregiving in El Paso creates attachments, and the intensity of these attachments is revealed in the emergence of worry, frustration, and guilt among caregivers. These feelings are difficult to shake off. Caregivers face constant difficulties in managing their emotions.

Compromiso

Clarissa, a twentysomething Mexican-American woman from El Paso, had the task of processing all the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) renewals before the October 5, 2017, deadline established by the Department of Justice after it rescinded the program on September 5, 2017. Having processed over 50 applications in the span of three weeks, Clarissa was emotionally exhausted. On a day nearing the deadline, I walked into Compromiso's kitchen and found her eating breakfast at lunch time while looking at her phone. She looked up visibly tired, a look the legal staff learned to recognize in each other. "I couldn't sleep last night. I had a nightmare that I messed up with some of the applications!" A few days later, when Clarissa was finished with the greater portion of the renewal applications, Rebecca, Compromiso's director and sole attorney, commended her for her excellent attention to detail at a staff meeting. This alleviated Clarissa's concerns, but only momentarily. On separate occasions, Clarissa continued to complain about neck pains and general tension that even her masseuse noticed around her shoulders. Physical strains of this sort are typical of office work, so their relief also becomes a regular topic of conversation. Exercise, massages, therapy, and

drug use (including alcohol) are ways staff members at Compromiso occasionally deal with stress and frustration.

Talk of self-care and burnout was a constant at Compromiso. Melissa, a thirtysomething Mexican-American woman from El Paso and the most senior staff member at Compromiso, continually warned staff members about the signs of burnout. On many occasions, she shared with me that once you start hunching over or feeling tension in your shoulders, it means you have begun to internalize stress. Melissa is aware of these issues because she has burnt out in the past. When Melissa began working at Compromiso, she would feel guilty about going back home after work to watch television, so she began taking work home. The toll of work led to a dramatic disconnection from work: she stopped using a cell phone. Without a cellphone, Melissa was unreachable outside the office. Neither work colleagues or clients could call her if they had questions about cases. Eventually the staff convinced her to start using her cellphone again. Despite her awareness about the initial signs of burnout, she still succumbed to the dynamics leading to burnout. During my fieldwork, after a week vacation during the summer, Melissa again began to take work home because she had fallen behind on her cases.

Melissa's experience illustrates the generative role of guilt, a moral emotion associated with harm done to communal or personal relationships (Haidt, 2003). Rebecca considers guilt a serious symptom given its intrusiveness during personal time. "Guilt. Intrusive thoughts. So, can you be enjoying your day and then suddenly you start thinking about somebody that's detained? And how you can't help them…" For some staff

members, even after knowing they are burnt out, guilt is manifested because they compare themselves to others. Kamila, Rebecca and Melissa's legal assistant, felt burned out after a year of working at Compromiso. She felt a sense of failure and guilt for not being as productive as others and also because others seemed to be flourishing under the same working conditions. In the caregiving exchange, then, feeling like one is not doing enough to help migrants weighs emotionally.

Additionally, frustration and burnout emerge in interactions with the subjects of care: migrants. Rebecca explains the feeling the following way: "one of the symptoms…is clients just start getting on your nerves…that's the best way to know you are burned out, that you need some time off." She related that after hearing similarly patterned stories of abuse over and over again, "When you've heard a VAWA story for the thirteenth time and you start to be like…you roll your eyes…you are just annoyed: why are you still with him?" Rebecca contrasts this frustration with the compassion that moves her, other staff members, and volunteers at Compromiso, but, she warns, "when you stop being compassionate, it's burnout." Rebecca also points out that given enhanced enforcement policies, burnout happens more easily because "there's little that we can do and we feel really helpless."

Care workers burnout at Compromiso because the state has created a stressful context for care. Without many resources, Compromiso cannot hire enough staff, leading to emotions of guilt and inadequacy among caregivers who cannot accomplish all the work that needs to be done. This combination of pressures, along with high levels of commitment to immigrants' wellbeing, causes burnout.

Casa Asunción

Isabel, a white woman in her late twenties from the Midwest, has been a volunteer for more than five years at Casa Asunción. She experienced burnout when there were some changes in shelter dynamics, specifically, when long-term guests with whom she has bonded left the house. And then there was the unexpected arrival of a large number of Cuban refugees that depleted the organization´s material and human resources. Other volunteers' criticisms of how she handled the situation made her feel devalued, exacerbating her frustration. Isabel explained to me how the departure of a guest and her child along with a conflict with another guest left her burnt out.

> …But when Nancy left, she had been with us for over a year. She had her child born when she was in the house. I was really close with the child and she left. And it wasn't just that. That was hard. That was hard to just go from being really close to this mom and this child and her other kids, too, from one day to the next, whether or not I agree with her decision, whether or not that was a good idea that they'll be okay. I mean, part of me is like, "Yeah, they'll be okay. He doesn't need me. He knows me and we're really good friends, me and this baby, but he'll be fine. He's got other people." But emotionally, it's a change. And then, I think right after that was when that mom that attacked me and so I was just exhausted.

Even though Isabel tries to hide it, she did not want Nancy and her children to leave. This strong emotional attachment to migrants, the disappointing news of their departure, her fight with the other shelter resident, and all the other work she was doing as shelter coordinator, ultimately led to burnout.

The reproduction of care work can be facilitated or undermined by the space of work. At Casa Asunción, the blurry division between work and life, that is, living where you work, allows the organization to react easily to crises, but it also makes volunteers feel trapped. Olivia, a twentysomething white woman from the Midwest and the

coordinator of another house run by Casa Asunción, explained the frustration emerging from how the place was set-up:

> Yeah, for me I think one of the harder parts is just feeling I can't get away because I am living at the house and I need to sleep there and I need to eat, and I also need to work…sometimes I feel like everything is so constant because we're always on call and there's always new things happening at the house that it feels like I can't always process everything. I'm also an introverted person so sometimes it's very exhausting for me to just to be with people in the house all the time. And it feels very hard to get away and process everything I've been experiencing with the people in the house. So sometimes I feel I get negative emotions too, just being frustrated or just so tired, and sometimes that makes me feel angry like sometimes I have needs too but I'm trying to meet all these other people's needs and respond. And sometimes I feel like I can't even do a good enough job of that because there's not always enough volunteers, and then I can't even meet some of my own needs. And so, I get – sometimes I just feel kind of negative about that.

The cumulative effect of physical and emotional tasks takes a toll on Olivia because she works where she lives. She misses a division between home and work. Absent the divide, being tired, frustrated, and having unmet needs makes her feel angry and negative. Ultimately, without the space to process emotions, there is no finality to a day or to an emotional dynamic. Olivia feels suffocated. Even though anger and other negative feelings are not what volunteers are supposed to feel at Casa Asunción--for it is supposed to be a sanctuary of compassion and peace-- they form a constitutive part of the experience.

For caregivers in Compromiso and Casa Asunción, burnout is the outcome of strong attachments under stressful conditions. Caregivers are attached to cases through the work they do and the migrants they meet. Knowing that migrants are in delicate situations adds emotional weight to caregiving. Caregivers reduce this weight not by quitting, but by strategically detaching from work and migrants while remaining attached

to their mission. In the next section, I illustrate the response to burnout: detached attachment. Through detached attachment caregivers renew their commitment to the immigrant rights movement.

DETACHED ATTACHMENT

Isabel defines the experience of being burnt out as "feeling exhausted, less emotionally connected to some of the work that I do or not wanting to, wanting to detach myself—emotionally, specifically. And not having as much…motivation." But these feelings are difficult to manage under the current immigration regime, which is aggressive in its actions against migrants. Caregivers like Alice, Isabel, and Olivia catch no break from caregiving.

Given the lack of resources to combat burnout, caregivers respond with what I call detached attachment: the process of physically and emotionally distancing oneself from care work, while maintaining a cognitive attachment to it. Accordingly, this process requires management on three fronts: 1) maintaining cognitive attachments to care work; 2) finding space away from care work to attend to one's own care; and 3) managing relationships with migrants and asylum seekers. This, I argue, is what keeps social movement actors persisting rather than ceasing to help. Through this process, caregivers are able to reaffirm their commitment to care work and their social change efforts.

Melissa is the most vocal proponent in Compromiso of detaching to relieve frustration. She explained to me the balancing act that caregivers in El Paso continually engage in when calculating how much they should work and how much they should rest.

> I was talking about it to a friend this weekend… and we were exchanging war stories…there has to be better self-discipline to separate work from leisure because it's almost like you are having leisure and then you run into somebody and something comes up and you start talking about things and it gets as intense as they are at work but maybe they don't have anything to do with immigration…but it's just like the brain is programed to work like that, all the time and she was telling me how she was able to help this one person and she had to work a lot of extra hours and she was super behind doing a bunch of other things that she needed to do at the time and while she is telling me this, the logical side of my brain is saying 'dude, you can't work twelve hours and then study and then try to find leisure.' The body is just not made for that, right? But like my bleeding-heart Mel from work [laughter] my bleeding heart *me* from work was, 'dude, she was so blessed to have had run into you because you changed her life in such an awesome way, right?

Melissa uses abstract categories of the 'brain' and 'heart' to distinguish between practices that make her a healthy caregiver--one whose body is rested--and those that make her a passionate caregiver—one whose heart "bleeds" for others. Melissa frames her concerns for leisure as self-centered, while she frames her passion for work as self-less. She recognizes that helping migrants under current conditions of overwork is unsustainable. Her conversation with her friend reinforces for her the need for boundaries. Here, Melissa's desire to help involves a cognitive attachment to care work rather than a purely passionate attachment. The latter can be draining and potentially inhibiting. The former allows her to moderate her passion, and to recast the work in a more detached light. Several interviewees spoke of their care work in terms of a recalibration, a tempering of expectations, a battle between what they want (heart) and what is possible to achieve (brain). This reveals the cognitive reframing of the relationship to care that is common in these organizations.

The second component of detached attachment, the search for space, was more poignant at Casa Asunción. The live-in requirements for volunteers here can overwhelm them. Olivia explained the role of space in caregiving, illustrating why the need for distance becomes necessary.

> And also just like listening to these hard stories all the time and – I mean that does affect me too and so not – sometimes feeling like I can't – there's not a good place for all those negative feelings to escape to before the next time that I have to be with people again. And even when I'm not on shift or if it's my off day and I'm still at the house for whatever reason, even just going to the bathroom or trying to get breakfast, people know that I work there so they come to me with questions and I can't even respond to my own really basic needs *[Laughs]*. I just don't always want to be around people, and that's really, really hard on the house. And so just being in that kind of environment 24/7 is exhausting. So sometimes I feel like I'm not refreshed to do it again. And I know that I'd interact with people a lot more effectively and compassionately if I feel I'm well rested and I had time to exercise and haven't just like been constantly in the house for the last two days meeting everyone's needs or trying to, to the best of my ability *[laughs]*.

Olivia describes the never-ending nature of her work, which causes a buildup of feelings that need to "escape." But Casa Asunción is not an appropriate place for an escape because the needs of migrants are so demanding. In order to help others, Olivia must first take care of herself; at the same time, this is exactly what Olivia and other volunteers signed up to do--to put the needs of others first. In the face of this dilemma, caregivers manage space so they can replenish their emotional energy. Olivia does this by leaving the house, getting exercise, because "just going to the bathroom or trying to get breakfast" can lead to requests from migrants or other caregivers. Olivia's search for space was common to the volunteers I observed and interviewed. Many expressed the desire for a "breather" or an "escape", and would find similar ways of achieving it.

The third component of detached attachment is the emotional management of relationships with care recipients. Here, Alice illustrates the anxiety emerging from close relationships between care workers and care receivers as a source of burnout:

> … I felt very challenged by…guests coming and going. I think of this mom that was with us for a while with her one-year-old and her two-year-old. And I felt like really attached to her kids and I really just adored them a lot. And then after a couple of months of being at A House she left…And so, I felt really challenged by that and I felt really sad and worried about her. I remember even having nightmares just about like her situation and like hoping that she was ok. I think that's just hard with people coming and going. It's like I'm happy for them that they're moving on to something else but it's also challenging.

Alice feels sad about being physically estranged from Casa Asunción residents when they leave, but at the same time, she is happy that they are moving on to "something else" when they leave the house, even though this "something else" may be worse. Uncertainty about the future of Casa Asunción's migrant residents worries Alice. It gives her nightmares. This worry was expressed to me by volunteers on different cases and I felt this worry myself when I lived in Casa Asunción. This management of relations with guests is the final component of detached attachment. The cognitive attachment that Melissa undertakes, the management of space that Olivia narrates and Alice's management of relationships with shelter guests show how caregivers reduce the intensity of attachments that lead to burnout. Detached attachment is a process that begins after burnout. It results in a renewed commitment to care work and social movement participation.

RENEWED COMMITMENT THROUGH DETACHED ATTACHMENT

While detached attachment is a response to burnout, it also has the effect of renewing commitment for the caregivers who engage in it. By the time I started my field work, Isabel had been living outside the house in a nearby apartment room owned by Casa Asunción. When she requested the apartment, Marcos, the shelter director, was concerned that Isabel was burnt out. Isabel shared with me that "his interpretation of being burnt out is: you need to leave or you should leave or people usually leave…in my sense, if it's something you care about, like when you are a mother and you are burnt out, do you just leave your child?" Moving out of the shelter was indicative of burnout, but was also a strategy that Isabel employed to be able to continue working. "Casa Asunción is basically a lifetime of emotions but really, really fast…[you have to let] yourself feel burnt out and trying to understand where that comes from." In order to do this reflective work, Isabel needed space that the shelter was not providing.

The management of space is essential to recharge physically and emotionally. The space afforded Isabel room to reflect on her emotions, ethics, and personal goals. Isabel's detachment, and that of other caregivers, strengthens the attachment to work. I interviewed Isabel a year after she moved out of the shelter, and she was going strong. She told me she wants to continue helping even in old age: "…what are my abilities and capabilities at that time. Can I still talk? If I can't use my hands, will I even be useful? Would I just give lectures? What skills can I use to still make a difference? I've thought about that for some reason." Taking space by moving into the apartment was very much part of caregiving for Isabel. It allowed her to keep caring. Detachment is not a negation

of emotion but a management, a search for a feeling of emotional stability, certainty, or rationality.

After Isabel told me how she dealt with burnout, I asked her if her job was difficult. She said no: "I think living is difficult. I think this [work] makes it worth living." Then, Isabel reflected on her career options; whether she should be doing something she does well or something that makes money. Ultimately, neither avenue does anything to mitigate her concerns about her complicity in what she perceives as an oppressive capitalist system:

> For me, that's just difficult to think, 'I'm taking the easy way out.' This makes sense. Doing this makes life—living in a world where—that's why there is so much oppression…[p]art of me is still living in the system but doing the work is the thing that makes the most sense and gives me the most life, makes it more worth living…And it's not about being good at a challenge. It's about doing what's right. And being able to fulfill that part of me makes it, makes life, life.

Isabel's reflections reframe the difficulties of her work by downplaying whether she is effective or not, and making the matter about an ethics of being in the world. This is an honorable position (Pugh 2013) where she sacrifices "taking the easy way out" for "doing what's right." Isabel says that being faithful to care work is easier than living a regular life. For Isabel, this makes it easier to live with her conscience, despite the difficult physical and emotional work of the shelter. This logic has no finitude, and Isabel struggles to articulate how her sacrifice is having an impact on what she identifies as the "system". Her open-ended motivations show that caregiving is not only about helping migrants and asylum seekers, but also about the perpetuation of the care work she identifies with.

Detached attachment, then, encapsulates the balance between the emotional closeness to care and the distance necessary to reflect on and calibrate the various tasks of caregiving. At Compromiso, Melissa's clearest form of detachment took place when she decided to stop using a cellphone. But the ability to disconnect from the casework itself did not mean migration was not on her mind. Activity on Facebook from various staff members at Compromiso indicates that they read, comment on and engage in debates about immigration on-line when they are supposed to be home resting. Sandra, a twentysomething woman from the Northeast volunteering at Casa Asunción, continually talks about her work when she is not at the shelter. In fact, she enjoys visiting detained migrants and asylum seekers with another local organization during her free time. Sandra considers these visits as rest from the shelter. Detached attachment allows for these kinds of engagements to occur without producing the turnover one would normally expect from burnout.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Final Reflections

Political, economic, social, and environmental factors have led to a dramatic increase in the number of displaced people from the global south in the last two decades. As a result, unprecedented numbers of family units are crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. In El Paso, Texas, family unit apprehensions by Customs and Border Protection increased 44,500 %, from 298 to 132,909 between 2013 and 2019 (U.S. CBP). Nonprofit organizations working on the U.S.-Mexico border region provide much-needed assistance to migrants and asylum seekers, including medical help, shelter, travel, and legal aid. These physically and emotionally demanding tasks highlight the practical implications of helping displaced people. They also involve a political dimension as organizations work within the immigrant rights movement by protesting the unjustified detention of asylum seekers, advocating for the protection of immigrants' rights, educating the public about the immigration system, and building local and national coalitions that seek relief and reform for migrants. This political dimension has become more stressful in recent years; already resource-scarce organizations now struggle to cope with both, rising numbers crossing the border, and fast-paced changes in U.S. government policy towards the border region.

Research on emotions and social movements mostly focuses on how people join social movements. While understanding emotions as a mechanism that triggers participation is important, I look at how emotions are also an outcome of the practices taking place *in* social movements. This helps us understand how people persist in social change efforts. I ask, why do caregivers in the immigrant rights movement continue

helping migrants when the conditions of their work lead to negative emotions like frustration and burnout? How do they cope with the increasingly stressful and unpredictable conditions at the U.S.-Mexico border?

I find that the relationship between emotions and care work is moderated by space, that is, through daily practices of care, people engage in place-making that either sustains or limits their ability to continue caregiving. The spaces in my research—the shelter and the legal aid office—manage not just the physical conglomeration of migrants and asylum seekers, but also their collective social suffering. This social suffering creates a sense of moral responsibility, frustration, and burnout for caregivers. I find that what keeps caregivers going is the practices they come up with to organize these spaces. These practices take place at the organizational and individual levels. Organizations become selective service providers, favoring migrant cases that are winnable in the case of the legal aid office, or easier to manage in the case of the shelter. Individuals physically and emotionally distance themselves from caregiving while maintaining cognitive attachments to the work. Case selectivity and detached attachments, as I respectively term two of these coping strategies, are articulated in the everyday practices of the movement. These practices also generate meanings and moralities that enable caregivers to care adequately for the migrants they can care for, and manage their own emotions when they cannot.

My findings show that conceptualizing social movements as more than protest, to include everyday caregiving practices, highlights how social change efforts are bureaucratized and sustained. I argue that collective effervescence and solidarity are not

enough to keep social movements going under extreme uncertainty and stress; coping strategies to deal with physical and emotional overload are also needed. A practice-based approach to the study of social movements helps us understand what these coping strategies are. This approach highlights how social structures inform the ideological content of social movement participation, and produce emotional and intellectual attachments to the work of social change.

There is empirical and theoretical value to bringing social movement participants into discussions of care work. Empirically, a focus on these participants allows us to move beyond protest--the collective effervescence that is so powerful in attracting and retaining members--into the quotidian everyday practices that ultimately carry forward the life and work of social movements. These caregiving practices are gendered and invisible, but they expand our notion of who caregivers are, as well as who care recipients are, allowing for calculations of the care economy to more accurately reflect the extent of caregiving on the ground (Duffy et al., 2013). Efforts to empirically measure the number of care workers for policy reasons miss caregiving within social movements (Duffy et al. 2013). Similarly, the literature maintains a constricted view of care receivers as dependents by virtue of their health or age. Here I show care work towards a population that has been rendered dependent by the consequences of state policies restricting migration, namely, the separation of families and the disruption of migration. While the caregivers I study are not engaged in care for the reproduction of one's own or another's family, they remain immersed in the politics of family unity and informed by familial moralities. Gendered mobilizing structures exclude women from certain roles,

while funneling them into others. In the immigrant rights movement, a lot of the everyday provision of legal and hospitality services is done by women.

These caregivers "make do" (De Certeau, 1984) despite resource constraints and an uncertain policy context, and while doing so, articulate an everyday form of political resistance (Scott, 1989). This is analogous to other movements of the marginalized that provide care, such as the Black Panther Party's provision of breakfast and medical aid to African-Americans (Heynen, 2009; Nelson, 2013) and the disability rights activists who create their own "care webs" away from state and family control (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018). Additionally, by not including social movement actors as care workers, scholars may favor the public sphere as the prime site for social movement research when other spaces might be just as important. Care work scholars, on the other hand, may miss how care work can also be a form of direct political action.

Theoretically, this dissertation focuses on a social movement in a morally charged situation demanding practical answers. How do you decide between providing quality care versus helping a greater number of people? In case of the border, social movements and their organizations provide care because of a state-produced crisis in the lives of migrants and asylum seekers. My intervention in social movement literature takes the everyday practices of movement participants seriously. Care work, in this case, and specifically the care for migrants, has particular histories in the United States. The immigrant rights movement has a historical connection to the work of the Catholic church and mainstream Protestant churches at the US-Mexico border. It is also impacted by the legacies of mostly Mexican-American organizations that have provided services to

and advocated for migrants' rights and wellbeing. As Polletta (2008) would contend, the cultural schemas of these legacies both enable opposition to the US immigration system, but may also constrain future actions.

In a context where urgency dictates the terms of mobilization, practical responses, such as collaborating with ICE to be able to help migrants, may undermine long-term visions and goals. However, participants were seldom thinking about the long term. Despite a desire for better conditions for migrants and asylum seekers, most caregivers have immediate problems to solve. There was never a sense that cultural innovations were taking place; or that the movement was changing policy or structures. Rather, the most creative and strategic interventions of the movement dealt with the creation of spaces. Spaces of intimacy, respite, joy and compassion. They came about through the ways places were practiced (De Certau 1984). My analysis is of how these spaces were created, sometimes failed to be created, and how participants remained committed. In other words, the goal for caregivers was to find ways to keep going, without which there is no long run to consider. Senior staff at Compromiso and Casa Asunción would often compare current conditions to the Obama years, or to before 2001 and 1996—when the government exacerbated the criminalization of migrants. A transformative reform always seemed far off. This is why I ask: what practices and strategies, in the current context of the migrant crisis at the border, create commitment among participants?

Social movements have been credited with creating public spaces that contribute to political change (Tilly 1993). In other instances, social movements create spaces to shield communities from state and economic forces, allowing for some autonomous rule

(Hesketh 2013). For example, "Not in My Back Yard" (NIMBY) movements prevent physical changes to neighborhoods in order to control how people live within them (Gieryn, 2000). Everyday practices also shape how social change develops in particular places. Urban spaces politicize communities in particular ways compared to rural spaces. Tilly (1976) illustrates this by showing lower engagement in counterrevolutionary behavior in the urbanizing areas of the Vendeé region in nineteenth century France. Oslender (2003) shows how everyday practices in the river basins along the Colombian Pacific coast shape how Afro-descendants organize politically and combat capitalist expansion. Gould (1993) shows that stable neighborly contact molded networks of trust that proved beneficial in the Paris Commune. But beyond how spaces shape mobilization, research on how space shapes moral commitment remains scant.

In the case of Compromiso and Casa Asunción, caregivers create intimate spaces through their work in helping migrants and asylum seekers. At Compromiso, caregivers draw intimate information while providing legal services. At Casa Asunción, volunteers live and work with migrants, leading to continuous interactions in a domestic setting. In both cases, intimacy becomes a vehicle for attachment. This demonstrates that just as moral commitments shape movement practices, practices can also shape the moral commitments of movements. Morality has been studied in social movements as a framing mechanism that initiates participation and maintains engagement. I expand this literature on morality in social movements by showing how caring practices—i.e. the everyday content of social movement participation—shape moral commitments. I find that contextually situated, reflexive, and regenerative practices of care shape a particular

familial motif of commitment. My findings demonstrate the need to understand commitment from the point of view of movement participants, and to situate these points of view in the material context of their everyday lives.

The moral force of family in social movements is a generative one. With care work in particular, hegemonic gender ideology constitutes domesticity and the family as women's domain. In cases where social change and care work intersect, movements have drawn on the conflation of morality and femininity. Since the 19th Century, women's middle-class morality has been used as the ideological basis for moral reform movements, including abolition, anti-prostitution, temperance, and women's rights (Ginzberg 1990; Tronto 1993; Young 2006). The Settlement Movement in the United States also drew from moral themes in its effort to reduce the social distance between classes. The most prominent leader of this movement, Jane Addams, held a pragmatic view of a democratic social ethic which she advanced, arguing for the "identification with the common lot" through the experience of working with marginalized peoples (Addams 1905, p. 11). Elena Shih's (2019) work illustrates the impacts of Western women's morality taken to a global scale. She documents the 'moral care work' of white women activists in the anti-trafficking movement in China and Thailand. Their approach to 'saving' women from prostitution hinges on normative conceptions of family, one that activists attempt to restore.

As a motif, the family can provide content to moral commitments and sustain social movement participation. In Compromiso and Casa Asunción, this happens through space. How and with what intention places are practiced infuses meaning into space. In

the case of the immigrant rights movement in El Paso, familial moralities help caregivers frame their relationship to migrants. I define familial moralities as commitments to social change efforts that draw on family bonds as moral imperatives. In other words, the notion that families belong together and are central to one's identity inform participants' motivations to continue participation. These emerge from the practices/ spaces in the organizations. Familial moralities take on different forms depending on the different spaces and practices of care in Compromiso and Casa Asunción. Participants engaged in care work at Casa Asunción begin to see volunteers and migrants "as family" while those doing more intellectual care work at Compromiso express commitment "through family", that is, by reflecting on their own family histories of migration and the principle of family unity. In both cases, the motif of family has affective value and keeps participants going.

Burnout is a fact of movement life. The scholarly work on burnout in social movements focuses on the types of commitment that keep social change actors from disengagement, and the organizational practices that prevent burnout. While engagement is good, too much engagement can undermine movement participation. When I first approached Compromiso, Melissa told me maintaining wellness was difficult in her job. She indicated that Compromiso was one of the only organizations in the city with connections to community organizations that address wellness. While I worked there for seven months, I participated in two wellness events. One was a mini-retreat in the office and the other one was a workshop for service providers in the city to cope with secondary trauma. Melissa pointed out that people in this line of work shift jobs just as they have

reached the peak of a steep learning curve. This undermines the organization's efforts and the community's interest.

Organizational practices, such as workshops and retreats, are helpful but they require resources. Given that Compromiso and Casa Asunción are resource scarce organizations, they are not able to provide all of the organizational practices necessary to manage burnout. Rather, caregivers are left to their own devices most of the time. This is where alternative strategies to deal with burnout emerge. Detached attachment illustrates the balancing act needed to maintain commitment within a social movement, with the distance necessary to both manage burnout once it happens and reduce the likelihood that it will emerge again.

The concept of "detached attachment" builds on and extends the literature on commitment. Most of this literature analyzes the components that make participation enjoyable or that fulfill a moral, political, or personal disposition. I found these things to be true among the movement participants in El Paso. However, for long struggles with no end in sight, sustaining joy along with moral and political commitments also requires some distance.

Detached attachment can potentially work for other forms of care work, in contexts that are resource scarce and politically contentious. Ultimately, I show how negative experiences are generative of positive outcomes. As the number of displaced people around the world continues to rise, the work of caregivers in difficult contexts also rises in significance. Future research can compare caregiving within and outside of social movement contexts to parse out the dynamics of detached attachment, specifically, to

investigate the nature of commitments to care as they relate to social change efforts. Future research should also consider how movement practices shape spaces and moralities. The physical spaces and the daily work of movement organizations varies. So does the emotional and moral affect they produce in movement participants. More research on the relationship between the material and ideological lives of movements can shed light on how movements sustain, or do not. Importantly as well is what kinds of groups respond to current political and economic conditions? Under what conditions are particular emotional states or ideological currents relevant for mobilization?

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